Lifestyle
Flower biz coming up roses in Baguio

World / A10
Massive protests hit Taiwan

Talk of the Town / A16
Lacson: Let's solve poverty first

Sports
Thorpe out of 400-m free in Olympics

Magazine
Hermie Who!

Rod Reyes: Snake pit to vipers' nest

By Carlito Pablo

CEBU CITY—A Malacañang is a snake pit, the camp of opposition presidential contender Fernando Poe Jr. appears to be a viper's nest.

Rodolfo Reyes, media

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Sunday
BALANCED NEWS, PEARLS OF VIEWS

Sunday, March 28, 2004 • 80 pages / vol. 19 / no. 111

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website: www.inq7.net

Mental patients in haven for street kids stirs worries

By Vick Cosmove

IT'S SUPPOSED to be a haven, not a madhouse.

The Jose Rizalia Center in Mandaluyong City is a halfway house for runaways and street children who have been "warned" from the streets of Metro Manila.

MORE ON, A9

Bailout illegal, MWSS told

Lawyer warned of graft, advised rejection of Maynilad deal

By Philip C. Tubeza

ITS OWN legal consultant had warned the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) against approving the proposed plan to "bailout" the debt-riddled Maynilad Water Services as this would violate the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, documents obtained by the Inquirer showed.

In a four-page memorandum dated March 15, 2004, MWSS legal consultant Leonardo Azores warned the MWSS board of trustees that the bailout deal would not only make the board susceptible for graft, it could also land it in a "conflict of interest" situation under RP003 sensitive regulating a company in which it served stock.

But MWSS administrator Orlando Hondrade played down Azores' warning, arguing that Justice Undersecretary Manuel A.T. Sorbaldez, who advised the government panel that negotiated with Maynilad, had assured the board that the deal would be upheld "in any court."

In the memo, Azores said he "could not find any suitable or even defensible ground to justify the approval by MWSS of the proposed plan submitted by Maynilad for its rehabilitation."

Azores said approving the proposed Maynilad rehabilitation plan "may expose" the MWSS officials to prosecution for violation of Section 3 of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, which wants government officials against entering into any "grossly disadvantageous" agreement or transaction, "whether or not the public officer profited or will profit thereby."

The law also wants against giving any private party "unwarranted benefits, advantage or preference."

He warned the members of the board that they would be "treading on dangerous ground" if they approved the plan, and recommended that it be rejected.

The MWSS board, however, approved the plan on March 17.

The MWSS and Maynilad had been locked in a legal dispute since last year when the Lopez-controlled firm announced that it was reading its 25-year concession agreement with the MWSS to supply water to the western zone of Metro Manila. (*See related story on Page A11.*)

Under the terms of the compromise settlement, the Lopez Group's Benpres Holdings was to invest in buildings in Maynilad, its joint venture with the French-based Suez-FRI.

The plan provided for the partial conversion of Maynilad's more than P7 billion in unpaid concession fees to the MWSS into equity, leaving the MWSS with majority control of the utility.

In an interview, Hondrade said public officials could not be held liable for any decision that they make in the performance of their duties.

MORE ON, A11

SEEKING STARS: Dyngyng surrenders President Macapagal's chairmanship in the Visayas, Susan Roces campaigns for her husband Fernando Poe Jr. in Cebu City on Saturday to double his clout power. Although not a Cebuano, Roces reminded voters that she's also Visayan being an Ilonggo from Jaro. The KNP confirmed that its presidential standard-bearer is leading in the region.

THE FLOATING restaurant can cannot (proposed by Ho during the Estrada administration) that never was may be again.

Dan who? Never heard, Palace says of Ho escort

By Jaime Laing Javellana
in Manila
and Tonette Orejas
PhilCentral Luzon Desk

DAR who?

President Macapagal-Arroyo's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said his deputy Ricardo Balweda yesterday said it was the first time they had heard of a Dan Balweda as a presidential adviser on foreign investments.

Another official would explain why Balweda welcomed and escorted Asian gambling mogul Stanley Ho on Monday at Clark, Pampanga, despite Malacañang's official denials of any business or political dealings with the tycoon.

"Dan who? First time I heard the name," Bunye said in a phone interview.

According to Bunye, presidential advisers hold Cabinet rank and take part in Cabinet meetings, and he had not encountered the name or person of Balweda.

Opposition presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson said the administration had opened itself to suspicion with Balweda welcoming the gambling czar. He said Balweda was once a lawyer of Ho's.

The otherwise proper Bunye suggested that Balweda, who arrived at Clark in a government helicopter, would still be among the "unusual advisers."

"We call on them if we need their foreign advice," he said. He did not say if Ho Macapagal had such advisers.

The impression thing, Bunye said, was that Ho Macapagal did not meet with the press if the two were in Pampanga at the same time last week, and that the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. had had no dealings with him.

Bunye denied reports that Ho had committed P500 million to Mr Macapagal's campaign chest in exchange for a casino project in the

MORE ON, A11

Ex-Comelec media chief: It's GMA ads

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE SACKED information chief of the Commission on Elections said his assessment on the controversial use of political ads by President Macapagal-Arroyo may have been the reason for his sudden transfer to eastern Visayas.

"How can you believe that the Comelec is sincere in prosecuting violators when I myself, a senior officer, am being relieved for merely explaining the law?" Redempto Paulson asked.

Paulson had been director of the Comelec's education and information department until last week when he received word that he was being moved to Tacloban, Leyte in Region 8 (Eastern).

But Paulson is not about to go down without a fight.

He told the Inquirer he believed his relief from the information post was "politically motivated."

MORE ON, A11

THE CHARM OFFENSIVE

JOSE RIZAL UNIVERSITY, MANDALUYONG: But can they vote? "But they said there are parents, aunts and uncles. A child's endorsement is priceless. All my life I go to the children whenever I campaign. They are the focus of my goals," Roces says.

'Who says I'm arrogant? I have no bodyguards'

Editor's note: The Inquirer continues a series of essays on the campaign style and impact of the five presidential candidates, a two-parter for each in alphabetical order.

By Ramon G. Velarde, *Deputy Editor*

(Last of two parts)

"I HAVE seven others, exactly like this one," Fanal Roces said of the bright red shirt with white flowers that he was wearing, like the rest in his entourage.

No operation is too trivial for the standard-bearer of Alyansa ng Ilonggo-Bisaya, Team 2 is one of his favorite non-political subjects. He earlier said his presidential wardrobe would consist of barong Ilonggo with guayabera for the rest of the campaign.

"But," he added before boarding the SUV that would take him to the coastal district of Talisay in Cebu del Norte,

MORE ON, A10

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 2004

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The entire country will experience partly cloudy to [illegible] skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly over [illegible] and Mindanao.

Source: [illegible]

Second FRONTPAGE

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

[illegible]

DISQUALIFICATION CASES

Ombudsman to probe GMA

By Armand N. Nocum

IGNORING Malacañang's view that disqualification cases filed against President Macapagal-Arroyo were "election-related," the Office of the Ombudsman said yesterday it would seriously look into four of these complaints filed not only against the President but other officials before the anti-graft body.

Earlier, the President insisted that the disqualification cases filed before the Commission on Elections were aimed at giving her detractors and the opposition "an opportunity to grandstand to be media."

"We are going to investigate and evaluate these cases to see whether they are complete in substance and form," Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo told the Inquirer yesterday, adding that the agency did not agree with Malacañang's view that "the cases were meant to drum up support for opposition candidates."

Marcelo, who is also the anti-graft body's spokesperson, said that although the President was immune from suit, this would not stop them from conducting investigation to see whether any of the cases could lead to an indictment complaint. "The President is not outside our jurisdiction on for the conduct of investigation arising from the exercise of [her] official," Marcelo said.

He, however, said the office officials charged with the Precinct would get the air earlier if there was any basis for the charges filed against them. "If there's a probable cause in the cases filed against non-probable officials, then these cases can reach the courts, because the President," he said.

Former Bureau of Land Transportation head Rhoderic Santiago, who had filed a disqualification and criminal case against the President for the alleged illegal use of the P14 billion road user's tax (RUT), also said he was confident he could win the case.

"I am not running for office, nor am I campaigning for any political candidate," he said.

Apart from the President, Santiago included in his charge Secretaries Hermogenes Esperon, Avelino Razonable, Jeanette Panaligan and Leandro D. Mendoza, heads of the public works, budget, finance and transportation departments of the government, respectively.

Santiago also sought the immediate suspension of Esperon, Razonable, Panaligan and Mendoza to "protect the documents" on the alleged misuse of the road user's tax for the President's campaign.

The President was named principal respondent in the case, for having allegedly approved the use of P14 billion for the implementation of the public works department's "Kalsada Natin, Ahapon Natin" project.

He said the President and Esperon, as ex-officio chair of the National Road Board, and other public works officials may have "conspired" to violate the provisions of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, the Revised Penal Code and the law on plunder.

"I specifically accuse (the President) with committing plunder of public funds, considering that she had unlawfully acquired and converted these as if it were her own, and for her benefit, the more than P1.4 billion used for her election propaganda," he said.

He also asked the government to order the public works and budget departments and the National Treasury to freeze the funds and to withhold payments disbursements of the project.

The first graft case against the President was filed by yet more prominent in the plunder case against ousted President Joseph Estrada. They accused Ms Macapagal of violating extradited laws by allowing Estrada to stay at his ex-house arrest in Tanay, Rizal.

Miriam mulls raps vs GMA 'tormentors'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's camp plans to turn the tables on the two opposition senatorial candidates who petitioned the Supreme Court to make the President take a leave of absence because of her alleged use of government resources in her campaign.

Former Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, who is the President's private counsel in the disqualification case against her, said lawyers Rene Fernando and Romy Amora first could be charged with coercion for pressuring the President from carrying on with her campaign.

She said sedition is an election offense under the Election Code, along with threats, intimidation, terrorism and the use of fraudulent devices to affect a candidacy.

"Thus, any person who threatens, intimidates or actually causes any damage, loss or disadvantage upon any person ... to compel (a candidate) to refrain or desist from his or her campaigning is committing an election offense," said Santiago, herself a senatorial candidate of the administration bet's K-4 coalition.

She said Raul and Roy, candidates of Senando Dar Jr.'s Koalisyon ng Naglalakbayang Filipino, were "themselves in danger of being disqualified for committing an election offense."

Santiago said that as in the case of the President, the counter suit would not stop the candidacy of the two senatorial aspirants. But, she said, this would mean they would be busy having to defend themselves.

She said that in Presented vs the Comelec in 1998, persons charged with election offenses would not only undergo preliminary investigation but a full trial.

Corruption report on Erap wrong, says Poe

By Cynthia Pabilo

CEBU CITY—Saying it was premature to judge his friend of 40 years, opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. yesterday defended ousted President Joseph Estrada who was included in the list of corrupt world leaders of the London-based Transparency International.

A non-profit watchdog that reports on corruption issues worldwide, TI placed Estrada 38th on its list for having allegedly stolen P79-80 million while in office. (See related story on Page A7)

"I think the report is wrong. They (TI) should look closely at the alleged acts that Mr. Estrada stole money" Poe told reporters on the second day of his campaign swing Cebu. "Anyway his trial isn't over yet," he added. The former presidential is facing plunder charges before the Sandiganbayan.

Estrada, who is detained at Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, until he pleas is on the global group.

In previous interviews, Poe was asked how he would treat Estrada should he win the presidential election. Poe's standard answer was he would allow the courts to decide Estrada's fate.

Friends since their movie-making days, Poe also lauded Estrada when the latter ventured into politics, and endorsed his candidacies for mayor, senator, vice president and eventually president in the 1998 elections.

Political analysts had said Estrada could be a liability for Poe.

Estrada's son Jinggoy, a former mayor who is Estrada's co-accused in the plunder charges, is running for a Senate seat under the Pwe-led Koalisyon ng Pagkakaisang Pilipino.

Presidiente Macapagal-Arroyo earlier urged voters to reject candidates identified with Estrada and the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Marcos' daughter Rep. Imee Marcos is a staunch Poe supporter.

The Tirapat ranked Marcos as the second most corrupt leader in the world after Indonesia's father, Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire), Sani Abacha (Nigeria), Slobodan Milosevic (Serbia), Suharto Desiderio Tinio) and Alberto Fujimori (Peru) were ranked after Marcos in that order.

Some of Estrada's inclusion in the TI list drew a sharp reaction from Malacañang. Willie Villarama, who said Estrada and Poe's "partnership" is distance them unless from each other was just "political comrades."

Muslims protest raid on QC center

a MUSLIM group has condemned Friday's raid on an Islamic center in Quezon City which resulted in the arrest of two suspected women terrorists, saying it was conducted to justify the implementation of an ID system for Muslims.

"The raid was an indication the police are bull-bent on connecting anything to convince [the public] that terrorists are hiding in Muslim communities in Metro Manila. What they're doing is a conditioning mechanism to turn public opinion against Muslims," said Nasrodin Al Ishaani, secretary of the Samar-Sangguniang Dang Iso group.

The group said it would file charges against the operatives of the National Capital Region Police Office and the Central Police District Special Weapons and Tactics team who conducted the raid on the Islamic Center on Ermin Garcia St. in Cubao.

Ishaani said the detention, officers, blocking ears and blocked C4 explosive reportedly seized during the raid had been planted by the policemen. Pino Gaviola

PDI GAGE ANVIL AWARDS
The Philippine Daily Inquirer took home three more awards during Friday's 19th Anvil Awards. The newspaper won awards for its recycling campaign called New Paper Drive, Inquirer's Youth Readership Program and for the New Inquirer Job Market. Accepting the awards were, from left, Inquirer chair Marixi Prieto, assistant vice president for strategic marketing communications Celina Maltarcia, Anvil Awards chair Cynthia Grant and Inquirer publisher Isagani Yambot. The awards are given annually by the Public Relations Society of the Philippines to companies with outstanding institutional and corporate PR programs. RICKY VICENTE (PDI)

'Enhanced autonomy' unacceptable–MILF

[illegible] – The Moro Islamic Liberation Front said on Friday a government offer of "enhanced autonomy" in the south was unacceptable, ensuring doubts over the recent peace process.

The government proposal was instrumental to surrender for the MILF's 12,000 armed rebels, Mohagher Iqbal, a member of the MILF central committee and head of the rebels' negotiating team, told Reuters.

"What they are referring to as an 'enhanced autonomy' is actually lesser autonomy because, basically this is demobilization," he said.

Iqbal said the proposal, which he was ahead of a planned resumption of formal peace talks, was unacceptable because it required the MILF to disarm and the Muslims of southern Mindanao to assimilate with the Catholic majority.

In 1996, the then largest Muslim rebel group made peace with the government in exchange for autonomy in the Muslim region, but the MILF has held out for independence. Its minimum demand is for a referendum among the region's five million Muslims.

Despite the autonomy agreement, the region remains among the nation's poorest and most militarized.

Malaysia has been brokering peace talks between the Philippine government and the MILF, with formal talks expected to start in Kuala Lumpur next month. An advance team of Malaysian monitors a stalling rebel arms this week to assess the start of a fragile truce line.

Iqbal said the rebel movement was in no hurry to strike a deal with the government ahead of May 10 national elections.

"We're finding a more innovative approach in solving the problem," he said.

"The position of the MILF depends on what the [majority (Muslim) people want," Iqbal added. "We merely articulate what the people want. Our people want self-determination, yet eventually independence but as long as we are allowed to govern ourselves in our territory."

With progress towards an overall peace settlement seen as unlikely for now, Iqbal said the stalemate talks would likely focus initially on the thorny issue of ancestral domain, which covers the exploration and exploitation of resources in Muslim-dominated areas in Mindanao and even by island clients.

"We can expect that there will be hard bargaining on that aspect," said Iqbal. Reuters

Ping's preference for Veep: No back-stabber, schemer

By Norman Bordadora

TUGUEGARAO, Cagayan Valley—Someone who would not stab him in the back.

That is the kind of vice president Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson said he would like to have if he wins the presidency on May 10.

"I'm nobody in particular in mind," the independent Lacson told reporters yesterday when asked who among the current vice presidential candidates he would rather work with if he wins.

"I just hope for two things—that the vice president-elect would not be a crony of the incumbent who'd grasp that title and that [he or she] would not scheme behind my back to have me ousted," said Lacson, who has been running mate.

Lacson's first prediction may well have been made in jest—a vice president, after all, is but a heartbeat away from the presidency.

The second remarked this month [illegible] or clip at President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Four before President Joseph Estrada was ousted in a "people power" revolt in January 2001, supporters of her vice President Macapagal within the military, business sector and the Church were already working behind the scenes to unify and strengthen their ranks in the event of her takeover.

Also yesterday in the north, Lacson pressed his denunciation of alleged corruption under the Macapagal administration, highlighted by the filing of seven disqualification cases against her before the Commission on Elections and the courts.

Lacson said that, if the British-based Transparency International anti-corruption organization found out about corruption under Ms Macapagal, she might eventually depose President Ferdinand Marcos and Estrada on the list of most corrupt world leaders.

"If they directed the corruption under Macapagal, Marcos and Estrada might be taken off the list," Lacson said.

He accused Ms Macapagal of spending government resources for her presidential campaign, including those of the Philippine Health Insurance Commission and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

Lacson claimed information had also reached him that the President had been selling superintendents and treasurers of schools offering them funds in exchange for their support in May.

"She's been offering them this and that, as if there's an instrument," he said. "And she's doing that while the finance department is having a hard time looking for sources of funds."

If this goes on, the Philippines may become another Argentina, its government unable to find any more sources of funds because foreign creditors refuse to lend it money, Lacson said.

Journalists set 4th Congress

THE NATIONAL Union of Journalists of the Philippines will hold its 4th National Congress on April 11 at the XXX Batute Magsaysay Hall in Quezon City.

With the theme "Media Under Fire," the convention will discuss a journalist's concerns, particularly job-related attacks, physical threats, censorship, suppression and poor working conditions.

Pantaleon Diaz Jr. said [illegible] non-dues kind if balance and that delegates from 45 NUJP chapters have signified their intention to participate in the convention.

Members who wish to attend the one-day affair may contact the NUJP Secretariat at tel. 433-0369 (look for Bernadette Bailo) or send e-mail to nujp_members@yahoo.com or join the e-group by [illegible] or nujp@yahoogroups.com.

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METROBRIEFS

Cops in kidnap rap

FIVE MEMBERS of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group and 14 others have been charged for kidnapping a Filipino Chinese businessman in Manila on March 19. Charged were SPO4 Romeo Rubio, PO3 Clayton Pabigan, Sebastian Magpayo, Edwin Castillo, Romeo Ardia, Jerico Pacheco, Isabelo Villanueva, Lolita Minarros, Joan Mabilo, Alberto Cabreag, Mary Ann Angcaban, Jun Ben Madrin, Janeth Pedrosa, Ulyn Pan-C, Clifton Langaoa and Faye Bailey. Tetet Sandoy

Driver charged

JEEPNEY driver Ernesto Simaco Jr., of Valiant Street, Manila, has been charged for the murder last March 24 of Isaac Bitonesca, 67, of 4005-B Bonifacio Dr., Barangay Olympia, Makati City. Simaco, who had driven one of Bitonesca's jeepneys, was tagged after police found bullet wounds on his forehead and right hand. He also had wounds on stomach. Maryjoe Orbe

Widow dies in fire

WIDOW Leticia Abadia Co, 51, was killed, while On a brigade conductor, Patrick Lee sustained a burn injury on his right middle finger when a 60-hour fire razed a building and several houses in Manila during Friday night, destroying P5.3 million in property. Co was asleep when fire, authorities said, broke out at the ground floor of the three-storey building in Sta. Cruz. Leslie Ildefonso

3 new priests

THE BISHOP of Legazpi has been blessed with three new priests in the persons of Rev. Fr. Dante Sarmiñana Bajillan, Rev. Fr. Victor "Jaworzi" Rivera Rivera and Rev. Fr. Anthony "Jhonel" Consuelo Flores. They were ordained by the priesthood and Bishop Ed' of the St. Gregory Cathedral in Legazpi City by His Excellency, Most Rev. Salvador S. Bernardo, DD, the auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Caloocan.

Caloocan bets brace for violence

SMALL COMFORT
These children enjoy a cool splash along San Lazaro Street in Sta. Cruz, Manila, in the heat of summer and the concentration of a looming water shortage in the Metro Manila. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

THE ELECTION campaign in Caloocan City is becoming potentially explosive.

Talked about his opponents on the campaign and the upcoming polls, mayoralty candidate Macario Asistio Jr. said there would likely be some violence.

But Asistio believes, who is running for mayor, told the Inquirer that several men on board two cars hurled stones at his home at about 9:30 a.m. yesterday.

He said the shooting was meant to "scare" him and his supporters.

Later, Rep. Edgar Erice, who is also vying for the top local post, complained that some of his supporters were arrested for pasting posters on buildings despite the consent of the building owners.

He accused his political rivals of "resorting to harassment by using the force of the government."

On the other hand, Mayor Reynaldo Malonzo, whose wife Cipi is running for mayor, said that the bodyguards of their rivals had harassed their supporters.

In an updated assessment, the Interim Police District declared Caloocan big but region to Caloocan, Barging Asistio, Bagong Silang and Dagat-Dagatan, as areas of immediate concern.

The police noted the "tension political rivalry" between the candidates' supporters. Malonzo, Asistio and Erice are former allies, while Malonzo and Asistio have been longtime rivals.

Asistio and Erice both vowed that their respective sides would not initiate violence.

Malonzo said elections in the city would become "magulo (chaotic)," but he said his administration was doing its best to maintain peace and order.

But Edward was unconvinced.

He said Malonzo, being the incumbent mayor, was in the position to harass rivals and that he could do everything to stay in power.

CANDIDATE'S SPEECHES

What was that again?

By Leiga del Puerto

SHOULD voters believe everything candidates say?

In a speech before 3,000 people Thursday evening, Ernesto "Bitoy" Domingo Jr., who is up against outgoing Mayor Reynaldo Alcalde Jr. in the race for Congress, said the city should not boast of its P1.3-billion earnings last year because it also "borrowed (P600-million in debt."

The business here asked him to expound on his assertion and Domingo declined that he was referring to a "credit line" made available to the city.

When the business pressed on the difference between "debt" that he used to criticize his rival with and "credit line," Domingo said, "They got a credit line but had not availed of it."

So, did he make a mistake in his speech? Only Domingo knows.

LTFRB, Piston on collision course

By Tina Santos

TSB PAGBABAGSA ng mga Drayber at Operator Nacionwide (Piston) reiterated its plan to stage a nationwide strike starting tomorrow even as the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) stepped up threats to punish those who would join the mass action.

Piston president Mar Gavida said the group's 200,000 members would push through with their protest actions until the government grants their demands for a fuel hike and a rollback in fuel prices.

But LTFRB Chair Maria Elena Santos was also unbending.

"Those who will participate in the strike would have to face the full force of the law," she said. And sanctions would include the revocation of their franchise.

Buenisa explained that the revocation of franchise was clearly stated in the Condition of Franchise given to jeepney drivers and operators.

"The Condition of Franchise says transport groups are not allowed to abandon their routes, agitate other jeepney drivers or operators to join the mass action, and paralyze the transport system," she said.

Gavida and Michaels Bola, the group's honorary chair, responded by daring President Macapagal-Arroyo and Buenisa to make good on their threat to cancel their franchises.

They added that they were out to fight for their rights.

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GMA 7

GAWIN NG PILIPINAS, GALING NG PILIPINO!

WOW PHILIPPINES 2004

Mystical Mt. Banahaw 'closed' for 5-yr rehab

Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Phil Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—A group of government officials and environmentalists started on Thursday to seal off with barbed wire the multitracking to the historic of mystical Mt. Banahaw. This begins the five-year rehabilitation program to protect the last grandeur of the mountain's natural resources.

Sally Pangan, presented upon supervisor assigned by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Mt. Banahaw, led a group composed of government foresters, volunteer environmentalists, hinggol kalikasan personnel, media, police and military in putting up the barbed wire near Gumalon Hills.

"The closure was a multisectoral effort. We're one in our decision to temporarily close the mountain for much-needed rest and rehabilitation," Pangan said.

Sen Juanig Mt. Banahaw is inhabited by spirits, elementals and other worldly beings. Many believers, both in shapes in hopes of experiencing something divine, particularly during Lent.

Manny Calanog, Dolores municipal and tutorial resource officer, said a composite team of civilian-enforcement and policemen would guard the fenced entrance against trespassers.

The communist New People's Army also proclaimed to cooperation. A source in the rebel movement said they would help guard the area against intruders.

"The NPA will not conduct any harassment against government forces while guarding the area," the source said.

The Protected Area Management Board, a multi-sectoral group tasked by the government with safeguarding the area, passed a resolution early this month endorsing a five-year closure of Mounts Banahaw and San Cristobal (Protected Landscape beginning July 30).

President Macapagal-Arroyo gave her approval of the measure during her campaign outing through in Quezon province last week.

The group utilized at least three rolls of barbed wire, measuring 500 meters, in blocking the trail. "We were able to cover the trail with at least five layers of barbed wire," Joe Lim, Hinggol Kalikasan community coordinator told Inquirer.

Lim said the closure was supposed to start on April 1 but the group decided in advance the unlawful due to reports from 'illegal' officials that pilgrims and other regular mountain visitors had entered the area.

"We have to move fast before Mt. Banahaw turns into devastated and thrill seekers. We want to avoid discussions with misinformed groups," Calanog said.

Officials from Barangay Bagong Buhay, another entry to Mt. Banahaw, said they would also seal the entrance to the trail in the coming days, as soon as the rest of the barbed wire had been delivered.

"We were told they would clash on the Laguna side of Mt. Banahaw," Lim said.

Calanog said that Talking Tangke, another road on the other side of the mountain, would also be fenced off before the end of the month.

A MULTISECTORAL group using Mt. Banahaw with barbed wire to allow the magical mountain to rest.

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NPA burns power plant; 5 killed

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo on Saturday ordered government forces to tighten security at vital installations after communist guerrillas burned a power plant and killed five people.

The attack on the Ormoc power plant, which resulted in the deaths of two policemen and three company employees, was the second such raid by the New People's Army on a power installation this year.

The President said the attack was "a crime against the people and shows total disregard for the lives of ordinary citizens."

"I have directed the [national police] and the armed forces to intensify security measures at vital installations and other government facilities in the provinces," she said.

In January seven people were killed when NPA rebels raided a military detachment guarding a power plant in Cabiao town, north of Manila.

The communist rebels stepped up attacks in recent weeks in the run-up to the May 10 national elections.

The armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, since 1968, has been waging a 35-year Maoist guerrilla campaign. AFP

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, March 28, 2004
Fifth Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Is 43:16-21

"Thus says Yahweh, who opened a way through the sea and a path in the mighty waters, who brought down chariots and horses;...

a whole army of them, and there they lay, never to rise again, snuffed out like a wick.

But do not dwell on the past, or remember the things of old.

Look, I am doing a new thing, now it springs forth! Do you not see? I am opening up a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

The wild animals, the jackals and the ostriches, will honour me, because I give water in the wilderness and rivers in the desert that my chosen people may drink.

I have formed this people for myself: they will proclaim my praise.

Psalm 125(126):1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

Everything seems to me as nothing compared with the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake I have let everything fall away and I now consider all to be garbage, if instead I may gain Christ. May I be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Law, but with the righteousness that God gives to those who believe.

May I know him and experience the power of his resurrection and share in his sufferings and become like him in his death, and attain resurrection, with God willing, the resurrection from the dead.

I do not believe I have already reached the goal, nor do I consider myself perfect, but I press on still to conquer Christ Jesus, as I have already been conquered by him. No, brothers and sisters, I do not claim to have attained the prize yet. I can only One thing: forgetting what is behind me, I now forward and run towards the goal, my eyes on the prize on which God has called us from above in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: Jn 8:1-11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again. All the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them.

Then the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They made her stand in front of everyone. "Master," they said, "this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now the Law of Moses orders that such women be stoned to death; but you, what do you say?" They said this to test Jesus, in order to have some charge against him.

Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. And as they continued to ask him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who has no sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And he bent down again, writing on the ground.

At a result of these words, they went away one by one, starting with the elders, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Then he straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go away and don't sin again."

Commentary:

Last Sunday we had the story of the prodigal son, with its theme of God's loving mercy. Today we see it being worked out in reality.

Everything was clear until Jesus stepped in. His woman was a sinner, his answer couldn't satisfy her accusers. It had the ring of logic, and it was meant to trap him. Everyone knows, of course, that this charity is despite not sin; it is rejected when THEY have sinned. Even the Pope have to appeal to the divine who sin within him. The priests and judges that listened were in court (in some countries) could share in some degree to be convicted in the personal level. I'm sure it's a necessary ingredient in their case, but I do think that the necessary ingredient in every personal judged, unprejudiced only one name.

If Jesus said, "Sir, the court can be kept to decide" (the could come him after reading the Law, and he said, "The Law forces be absent." For teaching about the mercy of God (for example, his story of the prodigal son) would not do the world. It never would.

The brilliant way in which by getting their trap on themselves makes this one of the world's great stories. It shows that mercy isn't the sentimentality of soft-minded people, but a power that can struggle in the hearts of the sinner—and in the hearts of sinners.

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Bailout illegal, MWSS told

Previous page A-1

that while Ateneo' legal opinion was considered, the board decided to look at the "broader picture."

He said it was the future of an economic and financial hub not the single owner if the plan did not proceed that made the board members go for the deal.

"Ateneo' opinion is one-sided. We dealt only with the legal aspect. And we have many lawyers. If you have three lawyers, you'll get **three legal opinions,**" Diambrabe said.

In his memo, Antonio said what the proposed recapitalization would result in a loss of P7.8 billion, "not to mention the huge expenses involved in the arbitration proceedings."

"The MWSS will be acquiring 83 percent of the capital stock of an insolvent corporation," he said, noting that Maynilad itself had admitted being insolvent when it appealed for rehabilitation before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court.

The firm said it had assets worth P36,940,206,299.61 and liabilities of P37,932,062,124.08 as of Oct. 31, 2003, according to Antonio.

83 percent of nothing

"Exchanging MWSS' claim for 83 percent equity would be buying 83 percent of nothing," Antonio said.

He dismissed arguments that making the Development Bank of the Philippines the trustee of the 83 percent equity would get around the conflict of interest situation.

He said the trustee to a voting trust agreement must win the shares in accordance with the instructions of the principal, in this case the MWSS.

"In effect, the MWSS would still retain control of its holdings, and that is where the conflict of interest would come in," he added.

Antonio said the plan, "while it extends great benefits and advantages to Maynilad" deprives the MWSS of a sizeable amount of income and provides "absolutely no return to the holders of these benefits."

Failure to protect gov't interest

"But the most paramount consideration is an effort on the part of trustees and the officials of MWSS and MWSA to protect the interest of the public and to the least for their failure to protect the interest of the government," he added.

The government has said that it had to agree to a settlement with Maynilad to avoid prolonged service disruption; immediate and unpredictable increases in the water rates; substantial costs, including the assumption of debt service by the MWSS and the government; and the difficulty of locating a qualified replacement operator to operate the concession with Maynilad's "unsatisfactory financial performance."

Bonifacio also pointed out that MWSS's lawyer in the case was the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel, which is supervised by Verbatim.

"(Verbatim)' new No. 2 is the law clerk (he himself told us that) we would get a favorable decision in any court," Bonifacio said.

He also dismissed arguments that the board members benefited from the approval of the deal.

"For once, five centavos, I have not even been trained to suffer," Bonifacio said.

He added that the deal still had to be approved by the Department of Finance and the National Economic Development Authority. If these two agencies reject the deal, it would be scrapped, he said.

Preempting high court

Government lawyers have submitted the deal to the Quezon City court which is hearing Maynilad's rehabilitation petition, to meet the Tuesday deadline for confirmation.

A source privy to the negotiations between the MWSS and Maynilad said the government could have moved for an extension of the deadline.

"They could have moved for an extension to file an amicable settlement but they are really trying to preempt the Supreme Court," he said.

The same source told the Inquirer on Friday that the government was bent on pursuing the "bailout" to preempt the Supreme Court from ruling on an MWSS (not Maynilad as earlier reported) petition to allow the government to redirect on Maynilad's P120 million performance bond, which was guaranteed by Bonifacio and Ondoy, then would be a "true-blue" of the looks of what Lopez-owned companies, that is, the creditor banks would immediately demand payment on their letter bonds.

The bailout could thus run counter to the court.

Bongbong Arroyo-vice presidency for corporate communications Ben Chanco yesterday branded the story as "speculative."

"It is very irresponsible of the business to give such preliminaries to a story from an unnamed source whose opinion is as good as anybody else's," he said.

Creditor banks seek independent audit

MAYNILAD's bank creditors which extended bridge loans to the ailing firm have demanded that an independent audit of Maynilad's books be made.

The banks, which include HSBC Bank-ing, Barclays Capital, Citibank N.A., Tokai Bank of Japan and Calyon of France, through their lawyers Castillo, Laman, Tan, Pantaleon and San Jose, said such an audit must first be conducted before they would agree to the composition agreement.

"The regional trial court should appoint an independent auditor to verify the financial data submitted by Maynilad. These should be verified so that we could go forward," said lead counsel Isidoro Custodio, adding that Quezon City Judge Reynaldo Daway should approve the motion.

Maynilad's lead counsel Ramon Ambrosio said, however, that an independent audit would take time and delay the finalization of the composition agreement.

Daway ruled that the court's appointed receiver, lawyer Renato Bondoc of the firm Bondoc, Mendoza Law Offices, could do the independent audit.

According to Amendment 2 to the composition agreement contained in the proposed compromise deal, the government would be absorbing some $47 million of debt the bridge loans acquired by Maynilad to finance its capital expenditures in 1999.

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Maynilad bailout plan is win-win, says Palace

By Jaime Laya Inquirer

MALACAÑANG yesterday denied it was close to trying efforts to recover billions of pesos in unpaid concessions from how the Maynilad Water Services and justified the alleged bailout plan for the Lopez-controlled firm as a "win-win" solution for everyone.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said that allegations that the government bailout unduly busy is trying to come to a settlement over Maynilad's indebtedness to the owners of the MWSS's "exclusive deal" with the Lopez family were "wrong."

"The government has been working to collect on the defaulted concession fee payments for the last three years. It's not as if the government has been sitting on its duties," Bunye said in a press briefing. "Have we done it a given for his "Show from the Palace" column in the government-controlled "People's Journal" newspaper.

But then the government realized that it could get tied up in protracted litigation with Maynilad as it had by the time the court cases are resolved, it would be too late to call in the firm's performance bond, which expires in June 2004, Bunye said.

History of conflict

Bunye's piece, which will appear this week but was released to Palace reporters yesterday, explains the history of the conflict between the then-Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and Maynilad, the joint venture between the Lopez Group's Benpres Holdings and the French-based Ondeo Phil., which won a 25-year concession on privatization of the western half of Metro Manila during the wholesale privatization of water services in 1997.

When Maynilad took over the concession, the MWSS had outstanding obligations of P13.9 billion, requiring an estimated P12 billion a year to service.

As part of the privatization agreement, Maynilad agreed to pay the MWSS monthly concession fees equivalent to P2.3 billion, Bunye explained.

As a form of security, there is would be able to pay the concession fees, Maynilad put up a performance bond of $130 million (P6.6 billion).

"Maynilad, however, started to experience operational and financial problems soon after [its] inflated huge systems losses due to poorly maintained pipes and also to pilferage. Maynilad's woes were compounded by foreign currency exchange fluctuations. Its rehabilitation petition, therefore, ballooned to P37.1 billion as the days prevailing rate of P39 to $1," Bunye said.

In March 2003, Maynilad defaulted for the first time on its concession fee obligations.

Despite this, Maynilad's unpaid obligations to the MWSS have grown to about P7.1 billion.

Bunye said the MWSS had been eyeing since 2001 to collect the unpaid fees by drawing on the performance bond.

However, Maynilad was able to head off the MWSS' attempts to collect through court maneuvers, the last of which is pending before the Supreme Court.

Last year, a Swiss-based international arbitration panel ordered Maynilad to pay the government what it owed in concession fees.

Petition for debt relief

In November 2003, Maynilad filed a petition for debt relief and receivership before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court.

The two companies, the situation had become critical, threatening to disrupt the delivery of water services to the western concession area. Many consumers of the facilities were in danger of neglect. More than 3,000 employees were in danger of being dislocated," Bunye said.

Clearly, the government had to act decisively and expeditiously he said.

"It is against this backdrop that [the] MWSS proposed to take over temporarily the operations of Maynilad. The move is based not just on the provisions of the concession agreement but also on Article 12, Section 17 of the Constitution allowing the government under certain circumstances to take over public utilities," Bunye said.

He said the terms and conditions of the proposed takeover by government were broached by the international arbitration panel and are still subject to approval by the Quezon City court and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Dan who? Never heard ...

Previous page A-6

Philippines. "That is not true. Whether or speculating that is making black propaganda," he said.

But Presidente issued a brief statement that did not answer the questions raised by Ho's rant.

"I have fought for governance based on morality and upright conduct," she said. "The issues of Report pertaining to my character and conduct in the discharge of my duties are public documents. The opposition is welcome to look into those records to verify the facts. The truth is there for all to see."

Potentially embarrassing

Subido said she could not say whether Ms Macapagal had authorized Ledesma to meet Ho at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport.

But Ledesma's presence at the airport on short notice to welcome Ho, a potentially embarrassing visitor, fueled speculation that Ledesma was there to "monitor" Ho's movements and contacts in the country.

Ledesma could not be reached for comment.

Bunye said he could not say whether Ms Macapagal had authorized Ledesma to meet Ho at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport.

But Bunye said he "cannot imagine if a presidential adviser on foreign investments meets with a potential investor, unless there's something illegal. I know it," Subido said in a phone interview.

Bunye gave the background. Subido said, it would appear that Ledesma, a presidential adviser, would welcome and escort him in the middle of Ms Macapagal's election campaign.

"Just looking at it from a bird's-eye and political perspective, I think it's politically embarrassing [for Ms Macapagal's administration] to have something to do with [Ho], especially at this time," Subido said, stressing that Ho was her personal opinion.

He said that while Ho might have a "straightforward" business proposal, this was bound to be misconstrued because of Ho's history and his alleged involvement in previous scandals at the Estrada administration, like that concerning BW Resources.

"It would be hard to believe that this was cleared with the President because of the political experience time," Subido said.

But he admitted that Ho would not come over "just to see the sights."

Subido said it was for members upon Toledo to explain.

"Since he was photographed and seen carrying the Ho, it may be good for him to explain (who). There may be a good explanation for this," Subido said.

Initially, however, Subido added whether the business was sure that the man photographed welcoming Ho was Toledo and a presidential adviser.

"I'm afraid I don't know him. I have never seen him in a Cabinet meeting, and I have never received any letter, communication or communication addressed to him," said Subido, who serves as the Cabinet secretary. "But, maybe he is also he maybe he."

Presidential advisers report directly to Ms Macapagal although they are functionally under Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, Subido said.

The Inquirer noted but failed to reach Romulo, who was said to be in a "closed-door meeting" yesterday afternoon.

'In good faith'

Ho, who brought in a floating casino-restaurant during President Joseph Estrada's brief but spectacular resignation it, was conferred an honorary doctorate in humanities degree by the Angeles University Foundation during his visit.

In a statement issued yesterday, the AUF said Ho was being honored as "a scholar in other philanthropic, civic and service-oriented undertakings."

It said that it conferred the degree on Ho "in good faith," that the AUF board unanimously approved the decision on March 1, and that the Gen. Antonio de Ochoa Regional Trial Court in Angeles City, Pampanga, issued a restraining order on March 8, where he was "needed more," according to newly appointed commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

He said he was shocked to hear Garcillano telling him that "the education and information [department] is not important."

Bañares dismissed suggestions from family and friends to resign from the Comelec, saying it was unfair to quit in the face of what he called injustice.

"Why should I resign? What is my fault? Those who are doing harm in the Comelec should resign. Those who are not doing their jobs should resign. Those who are destroying the credibility of the Commission should resign. But I will remain," he stressed.

Bañares is set to go to Tacloban as regional director of eastern Visayas on March 31. But he said he wanted to attend the graduation and recognition rites of his two children (and before meeting with them.

His wife and six kids, whom he left behind in Ilocos, blame for when he was appointed information director, relocated to a house in Cainta in June last year.

Ex-Comelec media chief: It's GMA ads

Previous page A-1

marian department was due to his statements on the possible disqualification of President Macapagal-as a presidential candidate in the May 10 polls if charges that she had campaigned election laws were proved.

Although obviously shocked by his ouster by Lerma, the former bar topnotcher said it might prove to be "a blessing in disguise" because the poll body's credibility was low and that it was beset with big problems, such as the unsolved Mega Pacific deal involving use of automated counting machines in the May elections.

"I do not know what the future will bring... God always works it out," he said.

Bañares first found himself at the center of controversy early this month when he said that political posters of Ms Macapagal were a road project could be torn down if it was established that their display violated election campaign laws.

He also said in television interviews that if the charges against the President were true, they would be grounds for her disqualification as a candidate.

Ms President Macapagal is facing seven disqualification cases for alleged violation of election laws, ranging from excessive use of broadcast time for her election ads to the use of road users' tax and disbursement of Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office cards allegedly for her election campaign.

Bañares said he had no regret in his decision that Malacañang was behind his transfer to the Visayas.

Bañares said Lerma summoned him on March 11—during a meeting of commissioners and senior staff and asked him to explain the statements he had been making to media.

"I answered him: Sir, I am just doing my duty as information director. I tell the people about the content of the law," Bañares said.

Bañares said he further told Abalos that his statements were "not a pronouncement of guilt. It is not a pronouncement of what the law is."

But the Comelec chair apparently was not satisfied.

On March 18, three days after the meeting, a surprised Bañares received a resolution transferring him to region 8, where he was "needed more," according to newly appointed commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

He said he was shocked to hear Garcillano telling him that "the education and information [department] is not important."

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"Why should I resign? What is my fault? Those who are doing harm in the Comelec should resign. Those who are not doing their jobs should resign. Those who are destroying the credibility of the Commission should resign. But I will remain," he stressed.

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Mental patients in haven for street kids stirs worries

From page A1

But lately, the government-run facility is being forced to accept a growing number of homeless mental patients, causing alarm among its staff and regular wards.

The JPC is currently looking after 47 male and 31 female wards who showed "psychotic tendencies" when they were picked up from the streets and yet are classified as "outpatients" by the National Center for Mental Health, according to the center's administrators.

Social workers are in a dilemma because the presence of the mental patients is proving to be "traumatic" to the center's legitimate clients, especially children, who are supposed to have a quiet stay at Fabella, officer in charge Helen Lomeda said.

Lomeda said her staff members are "concerned because we're just supposed to be an extension" of the mental hospital.

Fabella and the NCMH are practically neighbors in the government-owned Welfareville Compound.

Just by the social welfare depatment, the JPC is meant to serve as a transient home for wandering indigents. It has a 440-bed capacity.

"I am Gloria"

In the last months that they stay there, wards enjoy free meals and lodging, and are given psycho-social counseling, while social workers facilitate their return home or refer them to more specialized welfare agencies or NGOs.

"Children and mothers with babies, in particular, are being rehabilitated," Lomeda told the Inquirer on Wednesday. "There are nights when they are roused from deep by somebody making a loud "speech" in the quadrangle, declaring himself 'Gloria' or 'Cristiano.'

Now the children are scared to play outdoors, Lomeda said.

At other times, daytime services or counseling seminars for adults are disrupted by mental patients who suddenly push into classroom windows.

Numbers growing

Lomeda said the number of mentally unstable wards ending up at the center began to surge in the past month as local governments, in coordination with the Metro Manila Development Authority, stepped up their "rescue operations" for vagrants.

After the center referred nine patients who exhibited abnormal behavior to the NCMH, many of them were either refused admission or discharged after two to three days as "outpatients" who only required medication, Lomeda said.

Since Fabella has no enclosed section for mental outpatients and cannot immediately house their families, staff members are left without any choice but to keep a close watch on them as they mingle with the regular wards.

Screams

"The more we confine them to control their movements, the more they scream or turn violent, but they are already disturbing our daily activities," Lomeda said.

Reached for comment, NCMH chief Dr. Bernardino Vicente confirmed that many outpatients from his institution had been wandering up at Fabella.

Vicente maintained that, as a matter of policy, the hospital did not automatically admit all patients brought to it.

Vicente cited "overcrowding" and the hospital's meager budget as main reasons why the NCMH—now bursting with some 3,000 patients—"cannot take them all in."

"The most preferred treatment (of mental cases) is still outside the hospital. Hospitalization should always be the last resort," he said, maintaining that persons who are merely "mentally retarded" and not psychotic are best treated in a home environment.

Then Fabella should also understand our predicament," Vicente said. "At only P88 per patient per day, we need to be efficient in spending our funds."

The NCMH receives one of the lowest annual budgets among state-run national hospitals, he said.

He added that the economic future of NCMH due to revised efforts by the government to sell the Welfareville property also had direct significance to improve the hospital's serving capacity.

Safe at night?

Lomeda said that, fortunately, there had been no untoward incident among the wards at Fabella. But some staff members have suffered scratches [bubos] trying to control the behavior of some mental patients.

At night, a safe distance is kept between the two wards. The regulars sleep inside their quarters while the mental patients occupy cots lining the corridors.

"Our proposed remedy is to transfer the female patients to the separately exists for recovering NCMH patients, which is also in Welfareville.

"We're just trying our best to cope at the moment," Lomeda said.

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Rod Reyes: Snake pit . . .

From page A1

Former chief of PGA Boulevard in Paghakaraang Pilipino, yesterday admitted to reporters in an informal talk at the Waterfront Hotel that he had been a victim of back-stabbing within the camp and that even his access to the top man had earlier been blocked.

Asked what the other insiders might have against him, he told enamored Reyes said: "I really don't know.

"But you know, I have been in the corridors of power twice, and there is the usual intrigue."

Reyes, a veteran newsman, had close access secretary during the terms of Presidents Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada.

He disclosed that the intrigue was "much more" in Malacañang. "And even before [getting there], in the campaign period, you can expect some sniping. Even before they get to the corridors of power, there is already back-stabbing," he added.

But Reyes said he had no more problem getting in Pro: "With us. That was resolved."

Asked if he had a message to the intriguers in the Pro camp, he said: "OK dong. I don't have any problem with that."

Reyes did not identify the persons supposedly making life difficult for him. But he noted that the intrigue campaign had been much more organized because its handlers were "seasoned" in the game.

Asked if he was being provided sufficient financial resources to work with, he said: "We are operating on a budget that I think is very small compared to the other camps. But we have to live with the budget they give us."

Standard procedure

Much of Reyes' previous task of speaking for Pro has been taken over by Batangas Rep. Francis Escudero (whose father, Salvador, is in the ASEAN senatorial ticket.

Reyes said Escudero had brought in "some people [media handlers] with him," but pointed out that this was standard procedure.

He said he had no problem with Escudero, former spokesperson of the Barbadillo Presidency (relative of businessman Eduardo "Dazing" Cojuangco Jr.

Reyes also said he had been trying to convince Pro to be more available to the media. "I think our gamble is to solve the problem of media access," he said.

All told, Reyes described these problems as "little" ones.

"The thing is," he told reporters, "I hope we are not falling flat on our faces, at least as far as taking care of you people [is concerned]."

'Trapos'

According to the spokesperson of Sen. Panfilo Lacson, the other opposition presidential candidates, traditional politicians were responsible for the fragmented opposition.

And despite Escudero's cross-examined of the Barbadillo Cabinet, did not name names.

"The opposition must unite, but for what must we unite? For an old set of trapos? Or do we unite to make sure we bring in a new set of politicians?" Reyes said at a news conference in Tagaytay City.

"If it's for the same old discredited traditional politicians riding on the back of a popular candidate, we are serving the larger interests of the nation?" he said.

Reyes said these "trapos" had contributed to the government corruption that resulted in the recent looting of former Presidents Estrada and Ferdinand Marcos among the most corrupt world leaders.

He said voters would be better off with the two factions of the opposition uniting in the national interest and rallying behind a credible, well-experienced and independent.

"Let's sacrifice for the larger national interest and not put back in power the cronies who had contributed to the destruction of our nation," he said. With a report from Norman Bordadora

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gozon

Massive protests hit Taiwan

TAIPEI—In Taiwan's biggest-ever protest, 300,000 supporters of defeated presidential challenger Lien Chan massed in Taipei on Saturday to dispute his loss as China said it would not tolerate turmoil on the island.

A sea of yellow raincoats filled the square and streets around the office of President Chen Shui-bian in demonstrators defied rain to demand a recount for last Saturday's poll, which Chen won by just 30,000 votes out of more than 13 million cast.

Dressed in black as a denunciation of mourning and standing in fear of a huge rape trading "Democracy is Dead," Lien told the crowd he had counted more than 1,000 irregularities in the island's third-ever direct presidential vote.

"Today so many people gather here to demand a fair election. This is the most basic value of democracy," said Lien, leader of the Nationalist Party who also lost to Chen in 2000.

"Our common demands are very simple: nationalize recount. I want to ask Mr. Chen Shui-bian: what are you afraid of?" Stand up! Stand up!" The huge crowd shouted back.

The Nationalist Party leader called for an independent inquiry into alleged vote manipulation attempt that tightly wounded Chen and initiated a nationwide sympathy vote.

"We must be prepared for a long battle," Lien said. "We will not end our struggle until our goal is achieved. We must let the world see the power of the people."

The rivalry between Chen and Lien and the cause of support for the challenger threaten a protracted crisis that could paralyze policy-making in one of Asia's most vibrant economies.

Chen does not have a majority in parliament, making it difficult for his policies to be passed into law.

Beijing said it would not sit idly by if the protests spiralled out of control. The Chinese government is sensitive to pro-independence activities who back Chen's policy of greater sovereignty from using the vote-rival to reinvent its self-image.

"Any moves by Taiwan's leaders to promote their cause.

"Say no to Hellegate scandal," read one placard held up by the crowd. "Say no to the dirty election," read another raised over a huge placard replica of the Statue of Liberty.

Lien urged the crowd to go home, but warned Chen that his supporters would return in force to launch a new protest in early April if their demands over the disputed election were not met. He said he would pursue until the president's May 20 inauguration.

An extra 5,000 police were deployed to maintain order and units of helmeted officers in full riot gear stood in rows behind barbed-wire barricades in front of the presidential palace. Reuters

A PROTESTER displays a placard comparing Taiwan's president to former dictator Ferdinand Marcos during a rally in Taipei. AFP

Pakistan derides tape, vows to step up hunt vs al-Qaida

ISLAMABAD—Pakistan resentfully dismissed a taped message, apparently from Osama bin Laden's deputy, calling for the overthrow of the government, and vowed on Friday to step up the hunt for al-Qaeda fighters.

A CIA official in the United States said the voice on the tape was "likely" that of Ayman al-Zawahiri, a man Pakistan hinted its troops had trapped in a border region just days ago, although it was unclear when the recording was made.

"Can Zawahiri take over?" asked President Pervez Musharraf in an interview with ABC News. "I mean Zawahiri is on the run. So because's under just one rope. He's not get excited, but one rope which, even if he's, all alone with firearms, he can make in the mountains. What is the worry? How can never take over."

Pakistan said more soldiers would be sent to root out remaining tribal territories harboring Afghanistan to reinforce a crackdown on Bush and al-Qaeda fighters and Osca Pakistani allies.

The 11-day operation sparked a defiant message purportedly by Bin Laden's right-hand man Zawahiri, calling on Pakistanis to overthrow Musharraf and describing the Pakistani leader as a "traitor" in bitter wording for the United States.

Asked if he thought he would get Zawahiri and Bin Laden before they get him, Musharraf told ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopoulos" program: "Well, I can't be 100 percent sure. I mean, I am quite hope as my security. Reuters

Jordanian eyed as brains in Madrid blasts

MADRID—Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian linked to al-Qaida and suspected of heading a terrorist network in Iraq, is now believed to have been the brains behind the deadly Madrid rail-way attacks, a French private investigator said on Friday.

Investigator Jean-Charles Brisard said Spanish officials told him some suspects held in the March 11 attacks were in contact with al-Zarqawi as recently as two weeks before the bombings, which killed 191 people and wounded more than 1,800.

"They believe today he was the mastermind," Brisard, who is preparing the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, said in a telephone interview from Geneva, Switzerland.

The Spanish interior ministry declined to comment on his assertion. "The investigation is in a critical stage," a ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Late Friday, a Spanish radio station reported that police had a few they have located the house where the bombs were built. Investigators found detonators and traces of dynamite inside the house near Alcala de Henares, 30 km northeast of Madrid, radio network Cadena SER reported.

It said the attackers were believed to have used the building to prepare the explosives and stuff them into backpacks. The investigators found the house a week ago, according to the report.

Brisard's comments came as the probe spread to Germany, a key staging ground for the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

German police raided an apartment in Darmstadt where a Moroccan suspect arrested Wednesday in the Madrid train bombings stayed briefly last year. The 28-year-old man is suspected of membership in a foreign terrorist organization, a prosecutor said.

But German officials said they had no evidence that the Madrid attacks were planned or prepared in Germany.

Moreover, the entire country of at least nine of the suspects, reported in five arrests in the case, although a senior official said they had not yielded significant information.

In Spain, authorities announced another arrest Friday, and a judge charged a 12th person in the case.

Spanish investigators believe six or seven of the 18 people now in custody in Spain helped plan the bloodiest attacks and that al-Zarqawi was behind the plot, Brisard said.

In just two weeks, Spanish police say they have put together most of the pieces of the puzzle behind the bombings, according to Brisard, who is not a part of the investigation. "The picture is almost complete now," Brisard said.

"They are basically telling me that several of these people are talking a lot," Brisard said, referring to suspects he did not name.

Brisard is working for lawyers for relatives of Sept. 11 victims and has a copy of a dossier prepared by Spanish Judge Baltasar Garzon, who is investigating an alleged al-Qaeda cell in Spain. Garzon says the cell's alleged leader and other members helped prepare the Sept. 11 attacks. AP

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Nobel laureate wants voters to cast blank ballots

LISBON—Portuguese Nobel laureate Jose Saramago's latest novel, a fable about a right-wing government's violent reaction to an election in which 83 percent of the votes cast are blank, went on sale here Thursday with the author positioning the book would spark huge controversy.

"The whole political system is questioned. It would be very difficult for the book not to generate a scandal or not be accused of being provocative," he said in an interview published in newsweekly Visao.

The 81-year-old writer added he hoped "Essay on Lucidity" would inspire disgruntled voters around the world to cast blank votes to show their disappointment in politicians more than ballot boxes.

"I would like to know how a so-called democratic system would hold up if a majority of people everywhere in Europe decided to cast blank votes," he said.

In the 328-page novel the central government reacts by declaring a state of emergency and building a wall around the capital city while police use the element machines to force the voters' choice. Reuters

Saramago's Portuguese publishers, Caminho, said the book will have a first print run of 100,000 copies, around for a Portuguese novel.

First editions of Portuguese books usually sell just 5,000 copies but sales of Saramago's works have soared both at home and abroad since he became the first Portuguese to win the Nobel prize for literature in 1998.

A Spanish-language edition of Saramago's new book will become available in April with an Italian translation expected to hit bookstores later this year. AFP

Clarke testimony in 2002 sought to be declassified

WASHINGTON—Top congressional Republicans sought on Friday to declassify the testimony Richard Clarke gave in July 2002 that they said discredits the former White House anti-terror's criticisms of President George W. Bush's response to the terrorist threat.

US Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist questioned whether Clarke had lied to Congress, and said testimony Clarke gave nearly two years ago about the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks should—in some cases—be made public.

Frist's challenge of Clarke's credibility followed the Fox News Channel's scathing critique of Bush's former aide, who said in public testimony as well as in a best-selling book that the president failed to properly heed dozens of warnings.

The Tennessee Republican said Clarke's comments before the House and Senate intelligence committees in 2002 conflict with his testimony on Wednesday to a bipartisan commission investigating the Sept. 11 attacks.

"We, Clarke has told two entirely different stories under oath," Frist said, charging that Clarke said behind closed doors in 2002 that the administration actively sought to address the threat posed by al-Qaida before the attacks.

Clarke told the panel on Wednesday that the Bush administration in its first eight months in office regarded terrorism as "not an urgent issue"—which the White House has hotly denied.

Said Frist, "It is one thing for Mr. Clarke to demonstrate in front of the media... but if he lied under oath to the United States Congress it is a far, far more serious matter." Reuters

Bush launches new round of ME diplomacy

WASHINGTON—US President George W. Bush will meet next month with the leaders of Israel, Egypt and Jordan, the White House announced on Friday, launching a new round of Middle East diplomacy to lay the groundwork for Israel's withdrawal of settlements from the Gaza Strip.

The White House said it sees the withdrawal as a "positive" and potentially "historic" move, especially "when it unveils steps which the US backed "road map" Middle East peace initiative would enable US and Israeli officials have been working out the details and are seeking cooperation from Egypt, Jordan and others.

US officials said next month's meetings—the first in Washington for the administration to take sitting sessions in the region after the assassination of Yasser leader Ahmed Yassin by Israeli forces. As part of that effort, the White House has decided to delay possibly until April, new US economic sanctions against Syria for hosting anti-Israel militants, sources said.

Bush will meet with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, one of Washington's closest allies in the Arab world, at the presidential ranch in Crawford, Texas, on April 12.

He will meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on April 14, and lend support to his plan to withdraw settlements in the Gaza Strip, people involved in the discussions said.

US and Israeli officials want to make sure the withdrawal does not allow Hamas to cement its grip over Palestinian affairs in Gaza. Egypt has offered to secure its side of the border with Gaza, a move Israel sees as crucial to preventing the flow of weapons to Hamas.

At their meeting, Bush and Sharon are expected to "finalize understandings" on the settlements and security arrangements in Gaza, one source said.

Bush will then meet with Jordan's King Abdullah on April 21, the White House said.

An Israeli diplomat in Washington said the goal of Bush's talks with the three leaders was to forge a "consensus behind Sharon's proposal for unilateral disengagement" from the Palestinians, including Israel's full withdrawal from Gaza.

"This is not going to be easy but it's doable," the diplomat said. Reuters

French lawyer says he's going to defend Saddam Hussein

PARIS—A French lawyer with a reputation for defending terrorists and a Nazi leader said Saturday he has been asked to defend Saddam Hussein, ...

Jacques Vergès told France-Inter radio he had received a letter from Saddam's family confirming his wish an attorney for the former Iraqi leader.

"I was ready to do, read him and then I received a letter from his nephew," Vergès said, and read aloud a portion of the correspondence.

The letter read: "In my capacity as nephew of President Saddam Hussein, I commission you officially by this letter to assure the defense of my uncle." Vergès did not name the person who sent the letter.

United States officials have said they plan to bring Saddam to trial for alleged crimes against the Iraqi people, but the location of any trial and its format and date have yet to be decided.

Saddam is being held by US forces at an undisclosed location.

Vergès said he hoped for Saddam's safety.

"My concern is not the trial," the lawyer said. "My concern is ... [illegible]

condemned serial killer Charles Sobhraj and the Nazi Gestapo chief Klaus Barbie. AP

NOTICE TO QUEZON CITY TAXPAYERS

SB

AVAIL OF THE 20% TAX DISCOUNT FOR ANNUAL PAYMENT OF REAL PROPERTY IF PAID ON OR BEFORE MARCH 31, 2004.

(UNDER ORDINANCE NO.1081 INTRODUCED BY COUNCILOR ALMA F. MONTILLA AND VICTOR V. FERRER, Jr.)

All taxpayers are advised to settle/update their realty tax arrearages on or before March 31, 2004 to avoid inclusion in the AUCTION SALE scheduled for this year.

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WHAT'S INSIDE

PUREFOODS' Paul Artadi tries to drive past FedEx's Mike Madden in last night's PBA game won by the Hotdogs.

Hotdogs halt Express without Yap, Limpot

By Jurie Nakanaya

EDDIE Ilismo recovered his deadly touch and powered Purefoods past FedEx, 106-92, last night in the Grey Marauder PBA Fiesta Conference at the Makati Coliseum.

Ilisma showed his old marksman form against his former college teammate Mike Madden, scoring 30 points and pulling down 14 rebounds as the TJ Hotdogs notched their third win in seven games.

"I told him (Ilisma) that he should score more and he responded to the challenge," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio, whose TJ Hotdogs face the Talk N Text Phone Pals in a semi game in Tacloban City on Thursday.

Frustrated with his poor shooting in the past two games, Ilisma made amends by nailing 11-of-23 attempts from the perimeter for a 48-percent clip.

Madden, Ilisma's best-line partner for three years at Georgia Tech in the US NCAA, proved his worth with 32 points and 13 rebounds but only Roger Yap played consistently among the local Express.

The 6-foot-8 Ilisma's fast 22 points gave Purefoods a 51-46 halftime spread and the Hotdogs were never threatened in the final half despite the absence of James Yap and Jun Limpot.

Yap is still recuperating from a sore back while Limpot rode the bench for the third straight game to rest a sprained ankle.

"It's a nice win considering that we lost three of our last four games by a margin of only three points. And we did it even without James and Jun," said Gregorio.

Paul Artadi registered a career-high 15 points and alternated splendidly with Bob Johnson in orchestrating the TJ Hotdogs' fluid offense.

Mark Sanford had 16 points and 11 rebounds as Coca-Cola dumped Talk N Text, 107-98, in the other game. The Tigers tied their enema at 4-3 after surviving Arwind Santos's triple-double performance (20 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists).

Meanwhile, Batangas Citeries will parade Tawny Beagle-reborn it goes up against Shell in the second game of a double-header today at the Araneta Coliseum. Beagle replaced George Reese after the Gin Kings bolted U.S.

Alaska

Fast game

PUREFOODS (30)—Ilisma 30, Artadi 15, Johnson 14, Eman 11, Yap 10, Maybuyo 8, Soto 4, Pennisi 4, Castillo 2, Gonzalez 2.

FEDEX (92)—Santos 31, Yap 19, Mercado 11, Alvarez 7, Nieto 6, Atienza 5, Co Torres 2, Rodriguez 2, Ojarez 1, Bernardo 0, Ebreo 0.

Quarters: 26-30, 51-46, 76-82, 106-92

Second game

COCA-COLA (107)—Sanford 28, Lassiter 16, Fonacier 11, Mamaril 11, Austria 10, Ramirez 8, Jones 7, Reyes 2, Magsaysay 2, Lao 0, Arboleda 0.

TALK N TEXT (98)—Davenport 29, Santos 15, Villamin 12, Asaytono 7, Pinto 7, Co Torres 6, Nuyles 6, Yeo 5, Dela Cruz 4, Cruz 3, Ibanes 2, Ilustre 2.

Quarters: 26-30, 53-44, 77-80, 107-98

Standings

GALING PILIPINO MOVEMENT (GPM) is a non-profit private sector initiative of citizens committed to recognize, affirm and propagate what is good and excellent about being FILIPINO to develop a culture of excellence and a commendable sense of national pride as a value-centered foundation for nation-building. Inspired to stir up Galing ng Pilipino!

April-May 2004 Calendar of Events

NATURAL FARMING SEMINAR
8am to 5pm, Saturday, **April 17, 2004**
Chowking Pioneer, Mandaluyong City

BAGUHAN NA HINDI AMO'Y DADOT!
Innovative Galing Pilipino seminar conducted by Mr. Andry Lim. Attend this seminar and find out how to raise pigs, ***WALANG AMOY, WALANG LIGO, MALANG BIAHO!*** Learn how to grow ***CHEMICAL-FREE VEGETABLES AND FRUITS***. And even how to make concoctions using natural ingredients found in your backyard!

Seminar Fee: (TBA) Bring 1 Pig (Inclusive), (1) 2000 Kilos vermicompost

Galing Housekeeping Seminar
Hosted by Victoria Group of Companies
8am to 5pm, Monday, **April 19, 2004**
I-PEA Training Center
Hotel Victoria de Manila, Manila

GPM's eco-agro tourism program, BISITA PILIPINAS, will entail private homes, particularly ancestral houses, whose owners and caretakers are willing to participate in the development of a local bed & breakfast homestay program. Learn the techniques of quality housekeeping. And not how to make beds ala hotel-style. Know the proper use of cleaning aids. AND MORE! A well-kept house speaks of a well-run home.

Seminar Fee: (TBA) Bring 1 Pig (Inclusive), (1) 2000 Kilos vermicompost

GP KAPIHAN
8am to 11am, Saturday, **April 24, 2004**
Chowking Pioneer, Mandaluyong City

This monthly forum presents solutions to current and relevant issues concerning various sectors through inspirational sharing by Galing Pilipino role models. The GP Kapihan aims to encourage attendees to do the same and become significant individuals and contributors to a better society.

This kapihan features ***"BILIB AKO SA GALING MO!"***, part of GPM's I-Obra (Salok ang Obra) campaign. We have invited ordinary Filipinos who do extraordinary deeds which make them "Everyday Heroes". Join us! Be inspired and relive the Filipino spirit in you as we hear these heroes' stories!

GPM will present our own I-OBRA awardees. Hear their testimonies.... know how it feels to be awarded an I-OBRA citation... Know how entrepreneurship is to award one!

FREE BRUNCH! Hosted by Chowking

GP YOUTH KAPIHAN
8am to 11am, Saturday, **May 8, 2004**
Chowking Pioneer, Mandaluyong City

GPM believes that today's 18-30 year olds will be the driving force that will enable transformation into a Galing Pilipino generation.

This month's topic: ***"GALING SPORTS, GALING HEALTH"*** will feature cool Pinoy athletes who excel in their chosen fields. Get to know their workout routines, diet programs, and how they keep themselves fit. Find out what are the cool things to do this summer. ***"Be Cool, Be-in, Be Galing"*** this summer!

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UNITY CUP

Toyota-Letran debuts vs Viva

GAMES TODAY: Mixed Coliseum
3 p.m. —Qpinoy Pilas
5 p.m. —Viva RED vs. Toyota Letran
8 p.m. —Toyota-Letran vs. Viva

By Marc Anthony Reyes

TWO ROOKIE squads get a sampling of the strength of league old-timers when the PBL opens its 2004 season with the 2nd Unity Cup today at the Makati Coliseum.

Debuting Toyota-Letran, made up of the core of NCAA champion Letrans, collides with an intact Viva Mineral Water RED in the opening match at 3 p.m. following the 1 p.m. inaugural rites.

Leo Pipo-Arenas will also make its maiden appearance in the league, saddling Bonifacio ST in the 8 p.m. encounter featuring UAAP reinforcements.

But focus will be on the Knights being handled by Coach Alas.

"This is a complete team we are talking about," said Alas, referring to his varsity-like line-up, dotted the cage by clutching the NCAA title despite being a relatively young and inexperienced team.

"With last year's championship, we were able to get our confidence going. Now we also have offense, defense and the experience of playing together for one full year," Alas added.

The Silver Pirates, however, remain a formidable force as they survived the exodus of players to the professional ranks during the pre-season.

Viva will still have UAAP 2003 Finals MVP Armond Santos, Dennis Miranda, PJ Rimalia, Gerard Jones, Mark Isip and Cesar Cuff, who all played pivotal roles in PBL's triumphant season last year. Cebu flat Neil Rimalia, 6-foot-4, will also join the lineup having been picked No. 1 overall.

Alas will be banking on Ranjay Kaalle, formerly of Motorola and main stay of the Knights, as well as veteran Billy Mondy.

UA Toyota's Larry Fonacier and Paulo Bugia will be at the forefront of Leo Pipo.

Fonacier, with heart and soul after Compton a doubtful starter due to a knee injury incurred during the pre-season, will rely on front Vhicarra, Emerson Oftana and Derek Dabalos.

GABBY Lopez (left), chair (ABS-CBN, PBL chair Director Ily (middle) and Commissioner Chino Trinidad display the PBL commemorative jersey after the signing of the memorandum of agreement making Studio 23 the league's course for the next three years Thursday. The signing was held at the ELJ Building inside the ABS-CBN compound.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

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Discernment

EDITORIAL

CHANCES are, the thinking voter has yet to decide on the 12 candidates who deserve their votes for senator. Indeed, it is probable that many erstwhile conscientious voters will decide on their "magic 12" at the last minute, in the voting booth. The result will be to surrender the field to the unthinking many who don't bother to scrutinize candidates but instead, vote straight tickets merely on the say-so of their patrons and stand leaders. Once again, candidates who have name recall will have a formidable advantage when it comes to snap decisions made at the polls, or the logistical advantage of well-oiled parties and coalitions that spend for sample ballots.

As the national campaign enters the home stretch month of April, voters everywhere must begin devoting time and concentration to their senatorial choices. For those who put faith in parties, the combined national and local slates of their parties deserve their full support, since parties need working majorities to be able to get legislation and administration moving. For those who have a more critical and discerning attitude, choices for the Senate are even more crucial for several reasons.

The first is that every senator is a potential president. Any candidate elevated to the Senate becomes susceptible to presidential ambitions. Therefore, the voter must consider if the candidate deserves such a chance, and access to the vast resources available to senators.

The second is that the foreign policy of the country will be, from time to time, at the mercy of a Senate whose membership can affect our nation's foreign policy directly. All treaties are subject to the Senate's ratification or rejection. Large numbers of presidential appointments are subject to the Commission on Appointment's scrutiny, and senators have traditionally been very zealous (for good or ill) about their confirmatory role. A non-nationalistic president can be stymied by a nationalist Senate, while a nationalist president can be bogged down by a Senate with contrary views. The voter, as the very least, must consider if their senatorial candidates have any foreign policy positions, at all.

The third is that the future, as luck of it, of charter change will be determined by the composition of the 13th Congress' Senate. The major parties all have a position, either pro or con, concerning charter change. The presidential candidates have their own positions, too. So which of the senatorial candidates, the voter must ask, has a position closest to that held by the voter?

The fourth is the senatorial candidate's position on the pork barrel, and by extension, the candidate's position on how scarce national resources should be allocated for the public good. A candidate aspiring for a senatorial position is best understood by studying that candidate's reactions to simple questions, such as whether he will spend or return his pork barrel funds. Either the candidate will refuse such funds, and push for substantive changes in the national budget to deprive legislators of corruption-friendly patronage, as he will spend his pork barrel, to which case it's important to ask whether he will do so transparently, or in an open manner guaranteed to give rise to suspicions of wrongdoing. Either way getting an answer before election day helps an informed elector on May 10.

The fifth is the integrity or absence of it, of the individual senatorial candidate. Is the candidate known for having political will? Is the candidate known for frequently shifting parties and perpetually changing alliances? Does the candidate have a track record of ability in any field of human endeavor and, if so, by the standards of that field, known for fair dealings with people, the responsible use of funds, and the avoidance of conflicts of interest? The question of integrity is crucial to determining if a senator's vote will be up for sale to the highest bidder, or whether the senator can be trusted to behave independently and nationally, in the Senate.

On the whole, the Senate has been populated with forgettable politicians. Some, over the years, have gained notoriety, whether of the kind that is bad, or good. At the very least, the country needs senators who will do no harm, and better yet, senators who will do some good.

Illegal posters and streamers

SEPARATE OPINION

Sixto S. Cruz

WITH THE CAMPAIGN period for candidates for the Senate of Representatives and mayors and of local officials begin on March 25 (Mr. date before election on May 10), Metro Manila will be further defaced again with the usual illegal posters and streamers.

The candidates for President, Vice President and party list organizations have already started their spellbound campaign in touch different of the election laws. Things will become worse when the other candidates go into the act with their own brand of unlawful practices.

The problem is especially serious in Metro Manila which is eminent as a skid row during the campaign period not many months after. Sadly, it is hardly felt in other areas of the country, like Cebu and Davao, where the candidates are more law-abiding. If they can observe the law in those places, why are also in Metro Manila?

I was in California during one election period, and hardly around the campaign posters. There were small inconspicuous cellphone announcements, "Bernie's Dentist for Governor" and "Grover for Mayor," and I did not see any streamers. In Britain, there were big posters that simply said "Go Tory" or "Vote Labor" with the candidate's picture as background and nothing more. The power in the picture was her (with short hair).

In 1998, I found particularly portentous that poster of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo holding a rice like a corpse. She was running for vice president then and I could see on the front of the flower in her hand. The probability hoped she looked like those Asians and would get the support of the actress' fans.

Under the Omnibus Election Code, posters must not be more than 3 by 2 feet and can be painted in a common poster area designated by the Commission on Elections. Streamers are allowed if they are not more than 3 by 8 feet and only to announce or on the occasion of a meeting of the political party. They must be removed within 72 hours after the meeting.

These rules are more honored in the breach than in the observance. Posters of all sizes are painted everywhere and streamers are strung anywhere to stay long after the elections. Posters may individually comply with the prescribed size but they can be joined together to make one giant poster to scare motorists and mock the law.

Violations are reasonably imputable to the candidates themselves, but they are easily denied responsibility by pointing to their anonymous supporters. These supporters, who are in their own opinion the undoubted saviors of the Philippines, probably can happen only during the seven hours of the night when the policemen are asleep.

In fairness, the Comelec cannot be expected to cope with this widespread problem. The policemen officers are only Metro Manila but another parts of the country have their own local election codes. The local officials may not be responsive to help much because they usually are among the violators.

Many there be ugly, most if not all the streamers in Metro Manila had already removed billboards with their mammoth portraits announcing some project or program they were sponsoring. They were already campaigning then. I had written earlier against the junk billboards and the streamers of Mayor Lito Atienden who is running for congressman in Manila. These were painted as early as last year, but many of them are still there with the

Cool, not cold

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

THE STORY is told about a man talking to his officemate: "My wife and I had a fight last night," he said. His friend asked him, "How did it end?" "Why, she came crawling on the cot her hands and knees" he boasted. "What did she say?" his friend again asked. "She said, 'come out from under that bed, you coward!'" was the reply.

* * *

In Today's Gospel (Jn. 8, 1-11) the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, full of pride, brought in a woman caught in adultery. They were going to use the occasion to embarrass Jesus, but in the end, they ended up shame. Shown "standing on their hands and knees" after they were convicted by Jesus' words. "Let anyone among you who has no sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Today, let us ask for forgiveness for our sins of pride and self-righteousness, specifically for the times we thought (and maybe believed!) that we were better, holier and more righteous than others, to the point of looking down at "them," or were condescending to "them."

* * *

The Lord teaches us today to be slow in judging and in condemning others. He urges each of those in throwing down or putting down people, or belittling their qualities or qualifications. A very clear example of this is how we react to the present list of presidential candidates in the coming elections. By all means, let us discuss our own choices, but that does not entitle us to put down and speak ill of the others who are not of our liking or are not at par with our standards. Let the Magnificat remind us again: "He has cast the mighty from their thrones and has raised up the lowly."

* * *

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees were right in bringing in a woman caught in adultery "in act of legislation," for other all, they were teachers of the law. What was wrong was their hidden agenda to raise themselves up and to put down Jesus and the poor woman they caught. How often have we, in the name of God and country and for righteousness' sake, professed dedication and contrition, when in fact, our only agenda was our own very selves! Hypocrisy is the Wit. We are all good at this, especially our politicians, they're the best.

* * *

Jesus could have used the occasion to nail himself and put down those who persecuted him. But, He gave them a "gracious exit," for tonight there is hours, but the cross will be the silkworth hours to exalt their knees. Magnanimity to the 9th. Compassion and understanding for those who are misinformed or deceived. May we learn to raise up and not to kill those who are already down. Many a Pharisee must have gone home that night wondering what sort of a person Jesus was, amazed by His wisdom, but more so, crushed by His gentleness and compassion. Jesus knew how to close minds and hearts to such hearts. At the touches us again but only to win for the least, but also to go for the least. See you all, least no least!

* * *

For lawbreaker rules complaints, silent in Watchdog that they don't know how to handle these cases, learn Some Jesus knew did. Jesus handle the woman after everyone has left? True. He gave her respect by calling her "woman." Two, He gave her gentleness. Three, He gave her affirmation. Four, He gave her firm admonition. And five, He did not give the woman the chance to say sorry! Thinking aside, the formula of respect, gentleness, affirmation and firm admonition is a formula that does wonders for our soul. We should try it more often. The secret is to be gentle but firm, and to be firm, but gentle.

* * *

We were in Tabaco, Albay, Legazpi and Ligao last weekend for Lenten Recollections and Healing Masses. It was a beautiful experience to some home to find where it spent a year of regency as a seminarian at the Divine Word College there back in 1975. I look back with a smile and grateful hour whenever I think of "good Bicol, warm people." Come to think of it, even down on today also. So now, and when we should be Cool, but not cold. May we learn as he cool as we go through trials, problems, difficulties and storms. Through it all, in spite of all, they we keep our hearts warm. With cool, like's gone with Any warm.

* * *

Inviting you to join a pilgrimage to Italy and Medjugorje from May 29 till June 5. There is something about Medjugorje that touches our hearts and conversions so many pilgrims to a very quiet and prayerful area. Also from June 4 to June 8 pilgrimage to Sajo, Korea. For particulars, call 6156561 to 88 or 7117487.

* * *

Next Sunday, April 4 is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week. Join us for a half-day recollection starting at 8 a.m. at the Mariave Theater. Rapunzel to Jesus, may the Lord remove the oblivion in our hearts, and make us agree again to be SICK.

* * *

A blessings with the Lord

Lord, teach me to be cool, but not cold, and keep the warmth in my heart as I travel through life. Amen.

Gold in Athens, a worthy cause

REVELLE

Ramon J. Farolan

THE PHILIPPINES first participated in the Olympic Games in 1924 in Paris with a one-man contingent, the late Napoleon Rivera, who fortunately did not do anything to embarrass the country. He returned to the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam and 1932 in Los Angeles, but failed to win a medal. Then came the Second World War and the Olympics were suspended.

Our first gold medal came in 1936 in Berlin when Miguel White won the 400-meter run. Our second gold medal came in 1948 in London when Elma Muros won the 100-meter backstroke. Our third gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Leopoldo Serantes won the 10-meter pistol event. Our fourth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Mansueto Velasco won the 56-kilogram weightlifting event.

Our fifth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Onyok Pineda won the 69-kilogram weightlifting event. Our sixth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Naoya Ogawa won the 77-kilogram weightlifting event. Our seventh gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Leopoldo Serantes won the 10-meter pistol event.

Our eighth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Mansueto Velasco won the 56-kilogram weightlifting event. Our ninth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Onyok Pineda won the 69-kilogram weightlifting event. Our tenth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Naoya Ogawa won the 77-kilogram weightlifting event.

Our eleventh gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Leopoldo Serantes won the 10-meter pistol event. Our twelfth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Mansueto Velasco won the 56-kilogram weightlifting event. Our thirteenth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Onyok Pineda won the 69-kilogram weightlifting event.

Our fourteenth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Naoya Ogawa won the 77-kilogram weightlifting event. Our fifteenth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Leopoldo Serantes won the 10-meter pistol event. Our sixteenth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Mansueto Velasco won the 56-kilogram weightlifting event.

Our seventeenth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Onyok Pineda won the 69-kilogram weightlifting event. Our eighteenth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Naoya Ogawa won the 77-kilogram weightlifting event. Our nineteenth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Leopoldo Serantes won the 10-meter pistol event.

Our twentieth gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Mansueto Velasco won the 56-kilogram weightlifting event. Our twenty-first gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Onyok Pineda won the 69-kilogram weightlifting event. Our twenty-second gold medal came in 1996 in Atlanta when Naoya Ogawa won the 77-kilogram weightlifting event.

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TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to: [illegible]

Edu Juan V. Sermeno Jr.

Loren: Let's solve poverty first

THE VICE PRESIDENT is a heartbeat away from the presidency. He or she can become the Chief Executive if something happens to the President. "In case of death, permanent disability, removal from office, or resignation of the President, the Vice President shall become the President to serve the unexpired term," says Section 8, Article 7 of the Constitution.

As the then Vice President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became President in January 2001 because Joseph Estrada left Malacañang at the height of Edsa II. But Estrada avoided his followers claim that he did not resign.

"No person who has succeeded as President and has served as such for more than four years shall be qualified for election to the same office at any time," says Section 4, Article 7 of the Constitution.

Because Mrs Macapagal has served less than four years of the unexpired term of Estrada, she is deemed qualified to run for a full six year term. And so we have an incumbent President running for president.

Only three—Sen. Loren Legarda, Sen. Noli de Castro and former Tarlac Rep. Herminio Aquino—are vying for the vice presidency.

Seven weeks into the campaign, most voters have yet to know the platforms of the vice presidential candidates. This is because the media have focused on the presidential candidates.

We are featuring today the views of Legarda on economic, political and social concerns and how she plans to address these. In the next issues of Talk of the Town, we will feature De Castro and Aquino.

Friendships must take a back seat when national interest is at stake

By Loren Legarda
Vice presidentiable candidate
Kandidato sa Maghahalong Pilipino

Poverty is the most serious problem confronting our nation today because it is the root of practically all social evils. Its magnitude is so overwhelming that even our institutions mandated to solve the problem have been swamped.

The fight against poverty means giving Filipinos employment opportunities and access to basic social services like housing, health care and education. Then, and only then, can the evils of crime, malnutrition, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse and insurgency among others, be kept to a minimum, if not eliminated. Liberating the Filipino from the debasement being inflicted on poverty is, therefore, the priority in my personal agenda as well as the focus in the platform of the Koalisyon ng Maghahalong Pilipino.

The old governing order has miserably failed to improve the lot of our people. Change is imperative. There is the need for the Filipino to repair the empty promises and gimmickry of the administration and launch a new one that will work hard to alleviate the plight of the poor no time in delaying now, peace, progress and prosperity will not be attained.

ABS-CBN, Lopez family

ABS-CBN is where my professional career as a broadcast journalist was nurtured and developed and I will always be grateful to the Lopez family for the support they gave me during my early years in the television industry. I am unaware of how they view the candidacy, but rather it is citizens' democracy in which freedom of choice is a right, it is a right I will always respect.

My professional ties and personal friendships, no matter how cherished, must take a back seat when matters of national interest are at stake. Public service demands nothing less.

Unemployment

Our nation is poorer than most 10 Asian think, and the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. This gap is a potential source of social powder keg, which must be defused before it is too late.

Bringing economic and employment opportunities in the countryside by establishing small- and medium-scale enterprises is a good beginning. Government must offer these enterprises tax incentives and easy access to capital.

Deficit

We have a deficit problem because the government spends more than it earns. If this remains unchecked, runaway inflation will make life for the average Filipino more difficult.

Solving it requires increasing government revenues, not through additional taxes but through more efficient tax collection. Government should also put an end to indiscriminate borrowing. Funds should be used prudently.

Debt service

While it has its obligation to pay its debts, government must find the means to set aside a bigger share of the national budget for urgent social expenditures and anti-poverty programs. Not are a drastic reduction and for this reason are without any its interest of our people to pool its resources for national debt.

Globalization

Under my many campaigns, the Philippines is committed to liberalize trade with other nations by entering others, lowering tariffs on imported goods. Unfortunately, our promise of good faith have not been reciprocated by most developed nations. Worse, there is dumping and smuggling with the accepting consent of the administration. This, in turn, ruins local industries.

The Philippine banks are shooed to fair trade in a free trade context. Because our country complains with the international rules of free trade, our international markets have made with us do the same.

To level the playing field, the Philippines should withhold tariff reductions necessary on imports by countries, which do not offer the same economy as us. Governments must extend protection to agriculture because this sector is more vulnerable to unfair trade practices. Dumping and smuggling must be stopped.

Electricity

Among developing countries in Asia, the Philippines has the most expensive electricity, making the cost of production and services, which depend heavily on electricity, prohibitive.

Many industries have found it very expensive to maintain factories in the country, prompting them to relocate to neighboring countries like China.

Power rates are at an all-time high because of the unjust contracts executed with independent power producers by the Ramos and Macapagal administrations. Under these contracts, consumers must pay for electricity which they do not even use.

This problem must be solved at once. For starters, a review of the contracts by an independent body should be done. Where possible, a renegotiation must be undertaken. Should push come to shove, the unjust contracts ought to be nullified.

Corruption and pork barrel

The country has the dubious distinction of being the fourth most corrupt country in Asia and the 11th in the world. To effectively combat corruption, we need a zero-graft agenda, which will require that:

- All government transactions be above board and available for public scrutiny through the publication of contracts involving big money.
- The protracted and complicated bidding be stopped.
- Private citizens be encouraged to take legal action against government transactions tainted with graft and corruption.
- Stiffer penalties on individuals who engage in money laundering be imposed.

In addition, the Government Watchdog Act, a law I co-authored, should be fully implemented to regulate many transgressions in the way the supposedly development Fund (more infamously known as the pork barrel) is spent.

Moreover, we must bring our campaign against corruption to the classrooms. Our youth must be taught that crime does not pay and that corruption in a poor country like ours is the worst possible crime.

Land reform, food security

It's not enough that land be given to the landless. Government must take steps to help the farmer make full use of his land through a support system, which makes loans, equipment, supplies and technology readily available to him at affordable rates. Agrarian reform communities must be reorganized to make them more responsive to government-funded production programs.

Environment

I have long been involved in environmental causes like the sustainable development planning project. Many have passed me in these undertakings. Unfortunately, there are not enough. If we are to save the environment for future generations.

Government must have the political will to enforce laws which protect the forests, watersheds and the air we breathe. Our laws that must be implemented or all one is the Clean Air Act, which I co-authored.

Sustainable development should move from the realm of pure theories to the world of reality. For instance, the water shortage problem may be solved by collecting rainwater. Dams should be put up in areas where the topography lends it, taking care not to unnecessarily displace people and disrupt the environment.

Environmental protection should therefore be included in the curriculum.

Charter change

We should not be afraid of it. The Constitution is not sacred and was never conceived to be a static document. But the Charter must remain within the parameters of a democratic republican state. It must also not violate constitutional and basic human rights.

Like many others, I believe that certain provisions of the Constitution require updating. For example, a federal form of government is more suitable to the needs of the Filipino people than a unitary one. Federalism, to my mind, guarantees autonomy for the country's units, makes for a government that is in touch with the needs and aspirations of the masses, and does away with unnecessary bureaucracy almost always associated with the central government in Manila.

Keep position

The criminal cases against President Joseph Estrada is pending before the Sandiganbayan as the manner of its cessation for him may amount to prejudgment. Besides, President Estrada himself has ruled out any position for him and wants his junior take to course.

People power

The debasement process for electing and changing the president and other officials is laid out explicitly in the Constitution. That, is nothing to resist constitutional methods gives against the very heart of the rule of law and arbitrarily undermine the political stability of our republic in the long run. Only when the conventional process proves to be futile should people resort to the final remedy to arrest chaos with the old saying goes: Huhat, gamalea rotsolon—big problems require big solutions.

Mareva wealth

The cases involving the Marcos wealth and the proceeds of the coconut levy are pending before the courts, so let justice take its course. Personally, I would prefer that these assets be disposed of in the interest of the public. Only upon final judicial disposition of these assets will a decision on how to spend the funds be called for.

Insurgency

The communists and Moro insurgencies have plagued our country for more than three decades, causing tremendous losses in life, property and opportunities. Economic recovery is impossible if these insurgencies are not properly resolved.

Insurgency strikes at the very existence of the state, and for this reason, the state has the right to avail itself of every means at either fight it through military force or resolve it through dialogue. Because the communist and Moro insurgencies are two different armed movements, we owe it to our people to pursue the peaceful way out before choosing an all-out military solution, provided, however, that our democratic and republican institutions are not undermined in the process. As long as the possibility of a peaceful solution exists, victims and bereaved should be the final recourse.

Terrorism

There is absolutely no justification for terrorism. Governments must use all its might to fight any terrorist group operating in the country. No cause, however lofty, should be espoused through terror tactics. There are no winners in terrorism, only victims.

Death penalty

I'm open to the idea of reinstituting the death penalty because every life is sacred. Personal belief, however, should yield as a compelling state interest to protect the society from the commission of vicious and heartless crimes. This, however, is easier said than done. I'm in favor of passing a comprehensive study on the correlation between death penalty and the incidence of heinous crimes.

Foreign policy

The Philippines must pursue an independent foreign policy that upholds the national interest. There is nothing objectionable about maintaining friendly ties with its former colonizers—the United States and Spain.

The country must continue to support the United Nations in its task of maintaining world peace, a worthwhile organization that is dominated by developing countries and fighting terrorism. We must also fulfill our obligations to the international community in accordance with international law as the Commission of Human Rights, that must never be an instrument of national policy.

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has the final word on what the Constitution says and, more importantly, what the Constitution means. That is the basic ground rule of our constitutional government. This, however, does not mean that the Supreme Court has spoken on a matter involving the Constitution, we must respect it.

Justice

The illegal numbers game appears to be part of the rural and urban landscape. Efforts to eradicate it have failed and the stronger the effort or suppress it, the greater the propensity there is for corruption. Hence, banning it is ineffective from the standpoint of its economic or governance for him may amount to prejudgment. Besides, President Estrada himself has ruled out any position for him and wants

Population

The country's population is estimated at more than 80 million and is increasing at an annual rate of 2.36 percent. This figure is a key factor in budget resources for our people and their poverty in the long run. Growth a population management policy is in order. The state should undertake an information campaign in that regard and let couples decide, taking into account their religious beliefs and social norms on the number of children they want.

Divorce

Couples must be given a choice on the basis of their religious faith, intellectual beliefs and social attitudes. Testimony guarantees a choice.

Abortion

Abortion is illegal under Philippine laws. Strong Filipinos must be provided with adequate information on family planning and fertility so that unwanted pregnancies may be avoided.

Prostitution

Making sex a commodity gravely degrades human dignity and should end. Juvenile and underwriters human dignity finding prostitution requires giving the marginalized an opportunity to get basic education and the chance to acquire gainful employment.

Gay rights

The assembly of an individual to use the business of government as long as the individuals concerned don't disturb society or create harm to others.

Education

Philippine education is deteriorating. State investments in education is at an all-time low. Barely one of 100 students enrolled in public schools drop out before reaching high school. The performance of our students in science and math competitions attest it its embarrassment. In the age of information technology this is unpardonable.

Once upon a time, the Philippines was the leader in the field of education in Southeast Asia. We must regain that status.

The most-must increase investments in education so at least six percent of the gross national product and appropriate as much as possible, the beleaguered by Congress for this purpose. More classrooms, textbooks, desks and teachers must be made available immediately. If there is no money for them, then the money must be found.

Debt for education incentives in which firms can owe the national government can invite their obligation by sponsoring scholarship projects should be explored to the fullest. Even the standard system for secondary and college students must be encouraged.

Information technology will open the door to private opportunities for our youth while agriculture will always be a major industry for the Filipino. Then, schools and universities specializing in information technology should be put up. For instance, the University of the Philippines must be given all the support possible in the field of social sciences and faculty funding so that its status as a premiere educational institution of the land is maintained. Its campus in Los Baños can serve as an educational center specializing in Filipino agriculture and agricultural technology. In other aspects, there must be emphasis on languages, science and mathematics.

Housing

The administration admits that nearly 10 percent of our people do not have adequate and decent housing. The GSIS will make affordable housing available to our people through a centralized housing program of the SSS, the GSIS, the Pag-Ibig Fund and other government agencies.

Unemployment

Some 11.6 million Filipinos were unemployed in 2003, according to the Population Commission. A school-based feeding program in the most effective strategy to address hunger among children. Agricultural production programs is also imperative, as population growth has been outpacing food production.

INQUIRER Mindanao

'MingMing': A play of hide and seek

By Pearlsha Abubakar
Contributor

THERE is a saying among the Arabs that hiding one's thoughts is a sign of deep intelligence.

In playwright-director Soreen Pearsh Bernardo's short but ambitious work, "MingMing," which ran for less than two hours at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Evening Theater on Feb. 22 as part of National Arts Month's Mindanao Week, the characters are for ever drawing circles around each other.

That "MingMing" is a love story set in Muslim Mindanao makes the play very interesting to me (and to most Filipinos), given our hopelessly quixotic nature; set in a culture that I have never fully understood, it makes for a compelling psychological drama. Whose unsentimental quality recalls the favorite game of our childhood.

The telltale suspense lies in the fact that the play doesn't unfold in a linear fashion; it begins in the end, in the death of MingMing. Like the Bicolnga that gathers at the scene of a crime, the audience describes the stage in an almost perfect circle.

Surrounding the stage are gauzy white curtains where images of war and Mindanao are projected in between acts and on whose flimsy surfaces faces of veiled women and kaffiyeyed men stare back at you in stoic chills. As more people arrive in a steady stream, two stove while pots glittering in one corner, laugh and smoke while making some languid body movements, as though dismissing everyone's presence. If you happen to be either paranoid, you'll be fueling your bottle of mineral water at this time.

REVIEW

But the truth is, they are laughing at everything and nothing in particular.

According to veteran writers Chari Cruz Lucero (fresh from a one-day at the Philippine Free Press) and close friend, Charlies Encinas-Ortega (fresh from Legazpi City after attending the Second Bicol Writers conference), who were watching the play with me, these mischievous figures are called 'tsismis' or agents who look on with a smirk as we humans live out our crazy lives.

The plot unfolds behind the pansy-red that vanished the stage: Imelda, a young lawyer, try to—my impression. I feel like a Peeping Tom, and perhaps the rest of the audience watching behind these sheers feel the same, and there was a kind of screened energy tip-toeing through the crowd. This is something they have never seen before. This is the tip-in The Odyssey of Maranao Muslim culture.

Almost directly across from where we are (this is a very intimate stage), a few feet from the curtain, three figures—one male and two female—are seated on a table, beautifully, their faces lit up in mutual expression of worry and regret. You know right away they are MingMing's relatives, the older woman is her grandmother (Norsa Ilas), the younger, sprightly woman, her mother (Jinggay Perala), and the grim looking bearded man in fatigues (Al'Par'Mendal) is some avuncular relative of theirs with a death wish.

As the hours of this drama in a radiant Ming Ming (Elaine Macamiel), who is, quite inevitably, lying dead in the center of the stage, wrapped in a white shroud.

This, by itself, is already very disturbing to behold. Hints to: artists: the lights dim and the projections of mosques and tombs on the curtains transport us to Muslim Mindanao (somewhere between Maguindanao and Lanao, a professor in the audience later informs us during the open forum after the performance).

As the spotlights return, the lonely life the chorus of death from MingMing, who wakes up and utters her first line. The grandmother does the same, then the mother, then the uncle, and so on, but their lines aren't directed at any one present. They are screaming and crying their thoughts out, but no one among them is listening to the other.

The characters' lines, always spoken passionately, convey to us some semblance of a plot, and we are compelled to string them together into a story. In a sense, the play works on an interactive piece as we react, not after its conclusion, but during the process of its unraveling (and this almost renders moot the open forum after the performance).

Family feud

Through the bits and pieces of lines spilling out, we learn that the grandmother is married to a scion of a powerful political clan in and a family feud, the bearded man (who is her son-in-law and brother-in-law!) deliberately falls only by cutting a few lizard on the day of her wedding, and becomes a militant Muslim-nationalist, fighting off the modern ways slowly impinging on the old.

To save the dwindling family fortunes, the grandmother reverently marries her daughter to a bloodhead who turns out to have an appetite for young boys. Outwardly, the daughter seeks affection some place else, and MingMing, kept in the dark about her real father's identity, is the lone child, the sole manuel accretion of these poisonous tragedies.

The things I know about my culture—the love, the charity, the sincere generosity in love and revulsion over anger, the beauty and the horror of Islam-seeking men in army boots, ready to slay a supposed brother or sister to uphold the nuances that 'guides'—thrash about me like a fish out of water, yearning to throw themselves into the sea of lives being spoken in the characters: "Saan na si Mimay? Bakit ngayon kayo nadito?"

The mind tries to connect the disjointed lines to fabulous contexts (is it an honor killing? Did her uncle kill her?) until something in me renews. The effort is gumbo hopes of insight in the dread cube of endless questions.

Stunned

But how about the rest of the audience? Surely they must be experiencing these horrors as well? I look at their faces, mostly those of young students probably stunned out of a lazy weekend for this one class requirement, and realize that it is enough that they get even the slightest sense of this hopelessness, that oppression is not the property of any one culture.

Like an arrow pushed very far back against the bow, the slightest sense of tension will propel the audience's minds across a great distance, and somehow make them understand: What the hell is going on here?

Consider a line spoken by the bearded man (Mendal): "Hindi dapat mag-asawa ang babae."

As first, he appears to have spoken it out of pain, but later, you get a sense that he is driven by motives more profound than just sheer anger, when you realize how the very notion of dialectical discourse has no place in a culture where very manner is submission. In the end, it is how sensitive intelligence, fed by years of study in Muslim's finest schools, that actually drives MingMing and her mother ever closer to the edge of their sanity, that eventually claims MingMing in a death that is not just literal, but ritual.

Given the passionate nature of the play, the actors' performances, while deeply moving and passionate, are no longer the whole point. The point is not in getting answers, but in unearthing more questions. The point is in the hide and seek.

The play works because it perplexes. When there is a gap between two cultures (in this case, Manila and the Muslim South), everybody needs to rush out and build bridges of understanding. Endless forums and interfaith discussions abound. But with MingMing and with all their other creative endeavors on Mindanao's cultures, the foreground-shimmering mirror-coat, which is bound to Baguio City has somewhere to breathing new ground.

Residents want town placed under Comelec control

STA. MARIA, Ilocos Sur—Residents and officials of this town said they want their area put under the control of the Commission on Elections following the attack on Vice Mayor Romeo Tan on Thursday.

"I fear to bring him all over the town because of what happened to Vice Mayor Tan," said Lolan mayored her Elsie Cabato, Tan's running mate.

Tan, 44, was shot and wounded by two armed men near the Sta. Maria Church Compound at about 5:00 p.m. He was supposed to attend the signing of an election peace covenant with other candidates in the church compound.

Tan, a party mate of gubernatorial candidate Luis "Chavit" Singson, is running for reelection.

Tan earlier told reporters that the attack was politically motivated.

Cabato said at least 1,000 residents gathered for a prayer rally Thursday night and voiced out their concern for peaceful elections in the town.

"It was initiated by barangay officials through text messages. The people responded overwhelmingly," she said.

She claimed that her political leaders were being harassed by their rivals.

Singson said he asked Tan to stay calm and not to retaliate.

"Let the law enforcers handle the case. People (from rival political camps) should control their emotions because it might cause other violent incidents," Singson said.

Senior Supt. Hirsh Salvigan, Ilocos Sur police director, said the police would ask rival candidates in the town to sign a peace covenant to avoid further violence.

"We need to hear commissioners from both camps of their full cooperation. Enough a peace covenant," Salvigan said.

In a radio interview, Mayor Edgar Hernedo of the Liberal Party said he said he and his group had nothing to do with the attack on Tan.

In Batangas, two unidentified armed men gunned down a candidate for councilor in Talisay town 6 a.m., yesterday in Barangay Quiling.

Talisay chief of police Senior Insp. Jonathan Tangonan Jr. identified the victim as Wenancio Generoso Jr., 51, a resident of Barangay Quiling, who was running for town councilor under the Liberal Party banner.

"Generoso was just awaiting for his takeout lugaw (porridge) that was still being wrapped by the vendor when two armed men on board a red motorcycle came and shot him. Generoso got four bullet wounds on his back," Tangonan said.

The two still unidentified gunmen fled towards Tanauan City, he said.

Generoso was rushed to the St. Andrew's Hospital in town, but was dead on arrival. He expenses Declared to Palmera Villa to nearby Tanauan City he added.

Police recovered five empty shells of .45 caliber pistol and two .shotgunned slugs from the crime scene.

But Tangonan stressed that the killing was not election related, as it was Generoso's first time to run for councilor. Generoso was for barangay captain in 2002 but lost.

"We in the police department have known Generoso very well because he had been helping us in fighting drug addiction here in Talisay. He was even with us last month during the Lakbay Diwa program. He was very active in the anti-drug campaign," Tangonan said.

He added Generoso had been in bad terms with a former neighbor, who owns a carpooled drug pusher.

"We're theorizing that the man had an old grudge on Generoso," Tangonan said. Lorenzo Bellisio Jr., *PDI Northern Luzon Bureau and Mic Abagatan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Roundup

Japanese held for marijuana

CAMP OLIVAS, La Trinidad, Benguet—Police operatives on Thursday ten Japanese men who were transporting more than P1.8 million worth of marijuana bricks in Bontoc, Mt. Province. Police investigators identified the suspects as Shunsuke Tamaguki, 32, a native of Kanagawa, Japan; and Takeshi, 31, a native of Tokyo. Seized from them were 4 blocks of marijuana weighing 1.200 kilograms. Tamaguchi and Saito were detained at the Mt. Province Provincial Jail in Bontoc.

Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Suspected rob nabbed

PALAWAN, Bataan—A suspected top official of the New People's Army in Bataan was arrested by a joint police and military team in his house in Barangay Talaptap here on Thursday. Reports said Willy Bautista, 40, finance officer of an NPA unit operating in Bataan's coastal areas, was arrested by the joint operatives of the Philippine Marines and Philippine National Police.

Chief Insp. Arnold Gunnacao, Bataan police intelligence and investigation chief, said they recovered an M-16 Armalite rifle from Bautista's house. Bautista, a grandfather, has two daughters and one son.

Alcantara, a former mayor, is a Partidong Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) and Bautista is its top NPA chief. Virginia said her husband is a followed member and a supporter of the party-list group.

Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Barangay head found dead

CITY OF SAN JOSE DEL MONTE—A missing barangay captain of this city was found dead in Barangay Minuyan Proper, Police said a resident of Barangay Maulawin Rodrigues reported finding the decomposing body of Lupe Oliveros, barangay captain of San Isidro here. Supt. Marino Montalbo, city police chief, said Oliveros was reported missing on March 18 after he left his house and allegedly told his wife he was going to a meeting. Police are looking into a land dispute as a motive in the possible murder.

Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Sersagan teacher punched

JUGAN, Sorsogon—A barangay chief here allegedly punched and tried to poke eyes of a teacher of the Bacalod National High School (BNHS) in Jugan on the afternoon of March 26 two days after the school's graduation rites.

Barangay Captain Ramon Lanuza Jr. allegedly punched Bacalod NHS teacher Rebecca Bolinas and pushed her down to the ground. The police said Lanuza reportedly pulled the victim's hair and tried to poke her eyes with his fingers.

Bolinas, a resident of Barangay Jugan, reported the incident to the police.

Lanuza, who is also a member of the Sangguniang Bayan (SB) of Sorsogon, was charged with physical injuries.

Jose Rhodilyn Abuyo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Election task force

LEGAZPI CITY—Government and private agencies last week launched the Inter-Agency Task Force Chabacan to refer to the public about the candidates and ensure a smooth election. John Zaniano, head of the National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) Albay, said the task force will also monitor the campaign activities against the illegal forums and other related activities. The body is composed of the Philippine National Police, Commission on Elections, Department of Interior and Local Government, Philippine National Guard of the Responsible Voting, Namfrel, Department of Education, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Kabalikat Division, Department of Justice and Philippine Information Agency.

Joyce Rojillano, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Illegal recruiter nabbed

LEGAZPI CITY—National bureau of investigation men on Monday arrested a woman applying for a clearance after she was found to have a warrant of arrest issued by the court for illegal recruitment of adult. Edna Salvatus, resident of Barangay Playmates, Gubat, Sorsogon, was supposed to get a clearance for her travel to Bahrain. She filed her application with the NBI clearance on March 8 but because of doubtful records, the NBI asked her to return after a week. On her return, the NBI arrested Salvatus. She denied the accusations.

Ramon Lanuza, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Dad's house fired at

CEBU, TOLEDO, Batangas—The house of barangay councilor Antonio Silva in Barangay Poblacion 4 here was peppered with bullets at 1 a.m. on Wednesday. No one was hurt in the incident. Police said Silva was not home when the gunmen fired at his house. Investigators are now looking into motive in the shooting of Silva's brother, Provincial director Sr. Supt. Rodolfo Magtibay said Sto. Tomas police commander are now investigating the suspects.

Mia Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

PANDAN FESTIVAL
Contingents from all parts of Pangasinan show their wares in front of the Pagsanjan municipal hall during the town's second Pandan Festival Friday.

Suspect in Mindoro killings nabbed

By Marlon Ramos
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—At most a year after he was implicated in the killing of two militant leaders in Mindoro, a rebel returnee captured by military agents identified by the regional intelligence unit of the Mindoro police last week.

Mindoro police director Chief Supt. Alex Lapeña said suspect Jaime Flores, 58, aka Ka Jerry, Ka Alex, was arrested on March 18 at about 5 p.m. in Sitio Bugsayan in Barangay San Roque, in an island off Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro.

He said the former New People's Army (NPA) rebel had been in the custody of Bongabon Island when he had gone fishing.

Militants pointed to Flores as the one behind the abduction and gruesome murder of human rights activist Eden Marcellana and journalist Eddie Gumanoy on April 21, 2003 in Naujan town.

Lapeña said intelligence chief Supt. Liberato Gatmin, together with other members of the military intelligence group, headed the raid on Flores' safehouse. He said the suspect was arrested on the strength of five warrants of arrest. Three of these warrants, he said, recommended no bail.

Also found in Flores' house was an M16 rifle and several rare rifle grenades and six fully loaded magazines.

Police disclosed that the firearm belonged to a government troop which was lost during an encounter with NPAs in Sitio Ilog, Mirador Occidental on March 6, 1998.

Lapeña said the arrest of Flores would "definitely end accusations that the police is conniving with criminal elements in the killing of militant leaders in the island."

"Once and for all, I would like to say that we are only doing our job and we have nothing to do with the killings in the province as alleged by some people. We are running after people who are behind the disappearance of lam," Lapeña told the locusts.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo said his group was elated with the news and congratulated Lapeña and the Mindoro police. But he said he feared that the Army's 204th Brigade in Naujan would intervene in the trial of Flores.

Flores, who is now jailed in the Bataan jail, was one of the rebel returnees presented to President Macapagal-Arroyo on Oct. 2, 2003 in Cebu. He was then, Ocampo said, the suspect marked as "human" for the military.

"This is definitely a good development regarding the criminal case we filed against Flores and some elements of the military in Naujan. But I hope the police would not let the suspect take custody of the suspect," Ocampo said in a phone interview. "This could be a crux test for the Mindoro police in upholding truth and justice."

Ocampo said Oriental Mindoro police chief Senior Supt. Wilfredo Cellon should assure if time not to let the suspect or other government agencies to assume the case against Flores.

Lapeña, however, clarified that the court, not the police, has responsibility over Flores.

"It's up to the court to decide Flores' custody. The ball is now in their hands, not ours," he said.

Comelec asks Cebu town mayor to yield post to real winner

CEBU CITY—The Commission on Elections first division has ordered Mayor Leo Mancio of Bladenhon town, Cebu to vacate her post, less than two months before the elections.

In a ruling released Thursday, the Comelec told Mancio to yield the post to Zenaida Salazar who was the real winner in the 2001 elections.

The order was signed by Comelec commissioners Rufino Javier, Resurreccion Borra and Florentino Cuevillas.

Mancio refused to step down and vowed to contest the Comelec decision until it reaches the Supreme Court. She immediately filed a motion for reconsideration.

"Of course, I will not step down. That (the Comelec ruling) is not yet final. I will fight it until the end," she said in a phone interview.

Mancio is running for reelection in the May elections against former Madridejos Mayor Dionisio Salazar, the husband of Zenaida Salazar. Both are supported by the 3rd of President Macapagal-Arroyo for a bill six years term.

In a decision, the Comelec first division said Salazar won by a margin of 40 votes—3,224 votes as compared to Mancio's 3,184 from 71 precincts.

The poll body also reversed the decision of Regional Trial Court that upheld Mancio's proclamation and junked Salazar's election protest for lack of merit. *Jhunnex Sigmalbano, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Isabela radio stations opened, closed after 5 hours

CAGAYAN CITY—The two radio stations ordered closed by the city government in February were opened on Wednesday but were forced to go off air after five hours when city government personnel cut off their power supply.

The city government closed the dyAC Bombo Radyo Cagayan and its sister station, dzCD FM, for the non-renewal of its business permits.

Bombo Radyo officials said the city government broke the Commission on Elections ban on the opening of new businesses during the election period.

The Comelec on March 23 ordered a status quo that paved the way for the resumption of operations of the stations but the city government questioned the Comelec's authority to rule on the issue.

The order was signed by Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos and Commissioners Rufino Javier, Resurreccion Borra, Virgilio Garcillano, Mehol Sadain, Florentino Tuason Jr. and Manuel Barcelona Jr.

"In order not to render the issues raised in the petition moot and academic, the status quo as now order is hereby issued directing the parties to maintain the status prevailing before Feb. 17, 2004," the order said.

It allowed the radio stations to operate "until further orders from the commission."

But city administrator Felicisimo Bautista and agents from the city government and the police went to the stations on Wednesday and enforced the closure order. Electricians accompanying the team cut off the power supply of the stations.

Clarence Saldajeno, Bombo Radyo station manager, attended city officials for ignoring the Comelec order.

"They did not heed the Comelec order. They have a different interpretation of the law," Saldajeno said.

Mayor Carmen Ey, however, said he did not receive any election ban because he did not renew the business permits of the stations.

"It is ridiculous. Why should I be liable? I did not violate any election laws," he said.

He said he would ask his lawyer to question the Comelec's authority to issue a status quo order. The city government, he added, is seeking a legal opinion to clarify the Comelec's jurisdiction over the dispute.

But on Wednesday and the city government had not received a copy of the Comelec order.

The stations' officials and other groups in the province earlier claimed that politics was involved in the stations' closure. They claimed that the Ey family was behind the move because the stations were critical some of the Ey family members.

But members of the Ey family had denied involvement in the closure.

Isabela Rep. Faustino Dy III said it was unfair for the Ey family to be dragged into the issue. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Keep cool, tollways exec tells motorists going up North this Holy Week

By Marvin P. Mardo

MARK says that your car's cooling system is working. Check your radiator and battery hoses for safety concerns. And most of all, keep cool.

The person of advice were issued yesterday by Susan Sabares, vice president of the Legaspi-owned Manila North Tollways Corp., also Only Metro Manila.

According to Sabares, the main problems usually encountered during this period are vehicles that break down in the middle of the road and accidents that result in top jams.

Another problem is the presence of unbalanced vendors, who usually show up when motorists are stuck in one area.

To ensure the smooth flow of vehicles, Sabares said they have coordinated with the Toll Regulatory Board, Philippine National Construction Corp., Private Contractors, Leighton Contractors Asia Ltd. and government agencies to deploy 70 enforcers and emergency workers and their equipment along the road.

If cars need to set down some, Sabares said driving is given a confidence yesterday that they expect them personnel to arrive at the scene within five minutes.

Stalled vehicles or those involved in accidents will be towed to the side of the road for free but owners will have to pay if it is towed to the service center.

Traffic flow

Sabares also said they plan to deploy ambulant tollers to speed up the toll fee collection and ask the police to speed up the flow of traffic right outside cars, where heavy traffic usually occurs.

He said his firm expects the volume of traffic to build up starting Holy Wednesday up to Holy Thursday, level off and then build up again Sunday up to Monday afternoon.

With the expected influx, the volume of traffic is projected to exceed the usual 190,000 vehicles which use the road daily.

To keep the traffic flowing, the NMTC officials said at least three lanes—on both sides—will be made available to motorists while road work from Balintawak to the Valenzuela exit would stopped for the period.

Sabares also said that construction of the southbound lanes from this Balintawak to Caloocan would be ended for completion by Holy Week.

Counterflow would also be implemented together with the traditional "Lakbay Alalay program" of various groups to assist motorists, he added.

The NTC's tollway project is already 78 to 79 percent complete, the official said.

THE CHARM OFFENSIVE

MAMANGAT ILAMEL, LEYTE: Flora is one of his favorite non-political subjects. He has at least 10 literal sisters. —EDD K. GUMBAN

MAKATI CITY: Addressing the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines, Roco does away with his signature shirts. —JOAN BONDOC

'Who says I'm arrogant? I have no bodyguards'

From page A1

"Barot shirts to other voters, I have at least 800."

Like a rock star

The driver of the media van was in awe of the way "RAR" strolled. "Like a rock star," he said, "just a little less fast." Now the third (or counsel of the day was entering Talisay, Negros Occidental, always at the head of Ayalaya motorcades, suddenly pulled over. "Bubula! (Beginners! He's getting off to walk!)," the driver called out to another vehicle. A flood of flats was over the motorcade. Some broken umbrellas were applied.

Roco and his running mate Herminio Aquino led the candidates in invoking the crowd on either side of the unpaved road. There was no enthusiasm from the motorists, although they seemed to have been caught by surprise.

All in all, the group rained only a half hour, walking all the while and pumping fists. "Twelve minutes of brisk walking is equivalent to one kilometer," the "rock star," who maintained on a fitness routine months before announcing his candidacy, would say later. "I know, because that's what I do when I can't go to the gym for a long stretch of time."

Banana-ese sold out

Among the happiest Talisay residents as a result of Roco's visit was the vendor of pinangat, Gloria's glutinous, pyramidal-shaped version of the banana-rice. The enterprising lady sold out in that memorable half hour. Curiously enough, "RAR," who is often curious about street food, did not notice.

The investment had disappointed at this point, gone to the their worries, and when possible to coexist in entire sun—no, a bit of rest—before the start of the following day, at 3 a.m.

One television reporter couldn't hide his boredom earlier. "This movie is so ... quiet!" he said. "They really should be making a lot more noise—like PR1 (Fernando Poe Jr.) and GMA (President Macapagal-Arroyo)."

Two more pit stops, then on to the major event, the "big rally" in Bacolod.

But can they vote?

"Did you see that group earlier who told me, 'We love!?'" Roco asked Isday Santiago...are oki

CADIZ CITY: Rosalinda Roco Jose Torres at the Carmen market thrusts off Roco's shoes...after the candidate figured in a lot of brisk walking which he does whenever he can't go to the gym. —EDD GUMBAN

and last friend, and coordinator of the Mindanao campaign—on the way there. Magnitong, aka (Cardo) ng laughing, became his last (or second to last) friend. And they laughed without! At least, Rodolfo, natig-ng kanang, asked who Gloria or Herminio Jnr.? Or Wowie?

Behind-the-scenes meeting at a convenience called out, "Roco Aquino!" The inside RAR happy. "They are the focus of my goals," he said.

A tentative voice in the vehicle protested, "But they can't vote."

"Oh, but they each have two parents," Roco replied, "and aunts and uncles. What kind of adults would ignore a child who tries to convince them about a political candidate? It didn't endorsement is pristine. Remember, the power of children is mentioned over in the Bible. All my life, whenever I campaign, I go to the children."

'Hope senators'

He calls his seven senatorial bets "hope Senators." "They have become such a tightly knit group," he said. "One set short would not should take to over just one more."

To be sure, such one in the slate, with the possible exception of Herminio Aquino, a former congressman and Tarlac vice governor, has learned a thing or two from 1986 on the campaign trail, just as Isday Santiago did in her presidential election ago.

She counsels: "Do taught me how to reach to people, especially during a grassroots, where are were standing side by side. He said, 'Always use the same clothes from me, so they are use here.' Also, he said to try and never mention the opponents' name."

Thus, in the speeches of the Pope Senators's, Poe's running mate Loren Legarda is "young budtong, pulpol kapal ar seabeng prinsipyo (the woman who goes here and there and has no principles)," and Dick de Castro is "Mr. President, Inyan."

Unsure how the rally was at a roadside eatery, in full view of pedestrians and passing buses. People milled just outside the restaurant. Children shouted "Bocol Aquino!" to spectacle, RAR stepped out to dance to the beat and give them high-fives.

The much awaited "Big Rally" in the hometown of senatorial bet Joy Belmonte wasn't so big, it turned out. The speakers were unbalanced, and delivered better performances than they did in the mini-rally earlier, even if they said essentially the same things. Again except for Aquino, who normally said this time, "Pakiangat ja ako sa inyong kalooban (please find space for my name in your ballot)," and Bong Go, in his signature style designed like the Philippine flag, who cracked his usual teeth: "Rufus ya ako!"

She would explain the next day: "I was advised to count the women's vote." She would rather emphasize the unusual composition of the nominees' family—Mother and Children in one household—"but sometimes it doesn't come out right when I say it."

Edito Jimeo asked more than once, "We're not a Mang Pandoy, 'pag nanalo si Pandoy (when happens in Mang Pandoy if Pandoy [Ang] wins)?"

Frank Chavez did another Elvis, "Blue Suede Shoes."

Roco sang the easier Bisayan love song which he said he learned while courting his wife.

'Being smart'

The next "Big Rally" the following night in Cabanas town was definitely bigger. While the candidates did their thing, Isday Santiago was also ecstatic at seeds into street corners eating, meeting with women "political officials" (only 23 barangays). Some had traveled two days to get there.

"This is our manifesto," Isday said. "This is how we are doing things at ground level. This is what I call being smart."

And this is the woman who defied the Chinese government to mount a landmark women's conference in Beijing. She constantly harps about organize and organizing against all odds.

Emerging from the rally, Roco spent a few minutes with his women leaders, by way of telling them that their efforts were deeply appreciated.

"That," he said on the ride back to Bacolod City, "is how we are going to pursue our wins. The people will possess our wins."

Will Batiga looking cozy at the end of two days of very hard work, indeed, RAR was game for a quick Q&A:

Why do they say you are arrogant?

"In democracy and the values I espouse. That is clearly black propaganda. Who say this of me? They are the arrogant ones. They have arrogance of power the worst kind, because they misuse power. That makes them paranoid, and this is why my detractors need bodyguards. I don't. Even in Manila, I have no bodyguards. I myself wonder how I am protected. The people around me seem to take it upon themselves to protect me."

Who are your advisers?

"That should be clear beforehand. Among advisers counters that you understand what the advisers are saying.

NEGA CITY: The candidates usually sings the same Bisayan song which he said he learned while courting his wife, Soon, who's from Bohol.

Bulgarchi Angara was Oswaldo Stima (do's advisers Who is in jail, and who is not? Jose Pardo was also formula's advisers Again, who is in jail, and who is not? Not of course. I have advisers. (Associate Justice Antonio, formerly of the Asian Institute of Management, for economic matters; Nene (Pacific) Guevara, human finance undersecretary Jimmy Gabon Tan, former health secretary; Winnie Monsod; and Ramon Mapagsay Associate Jose Rodriguez."

Are the women leaders, like the ones back in Cadiz, enough to protect your votes?

"The youth sector, despite Robinson, is also organizing 350,000 precinct watchers. (Aquino had a huge forum earlier in the day with students from four universities at the Bohol campus of the University of Mindanao.) It's not in enough we have no organization, like they say. We have our own team we trained. We are organized. We don't have money, but the organization will protect us. Oh, I'm sure I can raise funds. However, the schools that Mendoza is talking about teams with the campaign. Definitely, how will the president secure security?"

What will your Cabinet look like?

"Young, aggressive, loads of people who think out of the box. Also like Uncle will be there as head of local government, Jimmy Gabon Tan will be there. I can mention only the two of them now."

The hunt for Colasa

"Now we can have chicken barbecue," Roco announced as the RAR boarded Sasa Cinema City limits. He added, pointing the driver, "Let's go where we went last night. Do you remember?"

"Sir, there is another place," the driver said.

"Aren't we having the announcement meeting tonight?" the staff willing to have asked.

"I'm still dizzy," RAR said, only half in jest. The whole group had been up since before sunrise.

The car swung into the driveway of "another place" called Quick Till Seven. "Wait! At dawn not here," the boss said. "Let's go to Colasa's."

Finally seeing the signage of the popular chicken place a few minutes later, RAR smiled broadly. "Ayan, chief (that is it). And then we'll have some dessert afterwards."

Postscript: What anyway?

Despite long for Manila the following morning, from Hope Senators, took the same chance from their hotel to the airport.

The conversation was animated.

Edito Jimeo: "The most noisy one? Bong Revilla will be representative."

Lorenzana (the group's consultant): "Why? Is he the one saying it will be the most noisiest? I've asked a geologist engineer to do it."

Their outcry is boundless.

Bong Cruz: "Of course. I'm an architect."

Cayetano (the blind lawyer): "Me, I sleep while I walk."

Tuesday Manuel: "I just eat and eat. And I pray."

Sunday BIZ

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Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

Brit exec says success secret is a supportive wife

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

A DEGREE in history from the Emmanuel College of Cambridge University provided Philip Morris Phils. Inc. managing director Chris Nelson valuable insights on the way people behaved through time to influence the course of events.

Nelson, however, is first to admit that his blazer of Arts degree in History did not fully prepare him for actually dealing with different kinds of people first-hand.

This he only really learned on-hand in 1981, when at 22, he was hired as management trainee at tobacco firm Gallaher Limited in the United Kingdom.

"That was my single biggest learning experience. It was one thing to know about people in the classroom but quite different when you are really out there," Nelson tells the business in an interview.

The job entailed making sales calls on potential customers to augment areas in south Gallaher's products.

He had a salesman assigned to him and he was required to make about 25 sales calls in a day. He came in arena cold. He knew nobody and the potential customers did not know that he was coming.

As a result, there were quite a number of customers who did not welcome his visit.

"I learned early on that people can be extremely rude and unfriendly. But there were some who would buy something from me and called me nice. It was very hard work," Nelson says.

There were days when he got more rejections than orders. It could wear anybody down, but Nelson treated these experiences as a continuation of his history studies at Cambridge, thus, providing him with direct knowledge on how best to deal with people.

"It was a job that you either liked or hated. There were many lousy days but the experience helped me a lot. It gave me a lot of confidence in people and I learned how to work with them," Nelson says.

This technical knowledge gathered over months hitting the sales beat proved invaluable in his chosen career in the tobacco industry.

Just two years later at 24, Gallaher sent the Southampton native to Saudi Arabia to be the company's market manager for Saudi Arabia and Yemen. In 1986, he was appointed brand manager.

It was in that same year when Nelson decided to leave Gallaher in favor of a management trainee position at Philip Morris International based in Al Khobar.

Philip Morris International is the global tobacco subsidiary of the Altria group, the world's largest consumer packaged goods company. Altria group's brands include Marlboro, Philip Morris, Virginia Slims, Kraft, Maxwell House, Nabisco, Oreo, Philadelphia, Post and Tang.

He describes the move to Philip Morris as a major turning point in his career as just three years later, he was given his first general manager position—short time by Philip Morris standards.

He headed the Saudi Arabia operations based in Jeddah for five years before being promoted area director for Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in 1994.

Nelson credits his Scottish colleague Tarquil McLeod for having helped him up the corporate ladder.

He says McLeod taught him to pay very close attention to details and to put in more than 100 percent to get a particular job done. Those lessons complemented his values of hard work and generosity learned from his parents.

The youngest of three boys was reared by a father who served in government and a mother who stayed home and instilled in the siblings the importance of getting a good education and working to achieve their goals.

From Saudi Arabia, Nelson was posted in Dubai where he was again promoted as area director for the Gulf Cooperation Council (composed of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Oman), Horn of Africa and Dubai.

Nelson attributes his successful climb up Philip Morris' ranks to having single-minded in his approach to meeting goals and the readiness to make decisions.

"An executive must be ready to make decisions. It may not always be right but you have to make it and you have to stick by it," he stresses.

He also believes that luck had a big hand in his career.

"I believe in luck and I consider myself extremely lucky when it comes to my career. I guess it was just being at the right place at the right time when opportunity knocked," he says.

Opportunity knocked again last year when he was asked to head the operations in the Philippines.

It was something of a homecoming for Nelson as his wife of some 18 years, Catherine, is a Filipina from a prominent political family in Camarines Sur.

They met in Bahrain in 1984 during one of the gatherings for expatriates. He was still with Gallaher while Catherine was a flight attendant for Gulf Air.

It took him five years to convince Catherine to finally say "yes" to his marriage proposal and the Roman Catholic couple got married at the historic San Agustin Church in 1989.

He never regretted his decision, saying that having a supportive wife is critical to every executive's success.

"Because I focus a lot on my work, I do not have as much time as I want with my children but

(GO TO B2)

WITH wife Catherine attending a drama party in Dubai

Officials shovel wet cement

THE AFMA Land officials' shoveling of wet cement onto wheelbarrows symbolically marked the beginning of the next phase in the construction of One Legaspi Park.

Representatives of the hospital's architects, **D'Arcy & Partners**, turns on hand. "We consider it as an accomplishment. It's a milestone in the construction of this project. We have done several projects for Ayala Land, and this is one of the tallest among the residential buildings we delivered there," says executive Ted Fontanos, partner-in-charge of design.

The group's managing partner for delivering with that achieving the top-off milestone requires the maintained utilization of the firm's resources: "There were a lot of queries till Corey reached retirement on time. That's why at a certain point, we assigned a group of full-time architect and electro-mechanical designers to address the contractor's queries.

All the partner groups stressed this assuring-ing declaration during the process of finishing the structural portion of One Legaspi Park, according to Ayala Land's Residential Buildings Group executive vice president Abel Bautista. "From now on, we'll be concentrating on the finishing as well as the electro-mechanical works. Concrete capping all is a milestone that is set right from the start. This marks the project's halfway completion."

Bautista shares that the turnover time will be around the first quarter of 2006. Unit owners will be invited soon to check for "defects" or to "punchlist," to the lingo of the construction business... before they move into their new homes.

For further details, call 848-5000, log on to www.ayalaland.com.ph, or email ayalaland@ayalaland.com.ph. Model units are available for viewing behind Filipinas Heritage Library, along Makati Avenue, Makati City.

Repack your bags and travel light

By Diana M. Velasco
Contributor

Executive Read
"Repacking Your Bags"
By Richard J. Leider & David A. Shapiro
Berrett-Koehler, 2002

FROM heavy stuff in flowers, positive and marketing—executives are being interviewed to move lasting things like ethics, finding soul in the workplace. And, this time, traveling light.

Why should work be a burden—when it can be that? It's book day-o-wasted if you haven't smiled at least once. "Whistle while you work," said the students of Leider and Shapiro in a book bearing the same title. How timely and apt in these times when the "joke is heavy" and "trying times are upon us."

The same writing partners Leider and Shapiro have a wondrous book, "Repacking Your Bags," with the sub-title "Lighten Your Load for the Rest of Your Life." It's amazing how an answer advice from Anais Anais (who said, "Take my yoke because it is easy") comes to us broken now in the 21st century.

Christian writer Max Lucado wrote a book, "Traveling Light"—an extended reflection of popular Psalm 23—which has essentially used the same thing. Modern men and women have so burdened themselves with the world's woes and worry that their backs are breaking and their minds are blowing!

Well, repacking your bags is a metaphor fit for Lent and the entire summertime. And executives may well check the usual inventory of their "bags" and divide which items to leave behind, and which ones to bring.

The first step is to unpack. The authors say: "It takes some serious unpacking...letting go—to move forward on the trip. To unpack it is needed, to see everything differently, to ask new questions. It is an important step in the process, to be whole."

There is the truest resistance to shaking up lifestyle dealing with "three bags of life," according to the authors: a briefcase (your work baggage), an overnight bag (your love baggage), and a trunk (your phone baggage).

EXECUTIVE READ

All three "bags" are discussed with heartwarming stories from the authors' adventures in change.

In unpacking, you will soon be confronted with this question with what is really important in life. Equipped in its inevitable, what do you really need?

The most logical question is: What will make you happy? The authors announce the happiness formula with this: "Living is a place you belong, with the people you love, doing the flight blade, on Purpose." Their practical enough to deal with a theory of people and their illnesses, and that's specific enough to identify the essentials.

Such simple formula deals with four deadly fears, the book says...albeit are the fear of having lived a meaningless life. Fear which are to death with by "work"; that of being alone (dealt with by "love"); fear of being lost ("plans" will take care of that); and fear of dying (a sense of "purpose" removes the sting of death).

The book is a unflagging of quotes from poets, ministers and philosophers—adult-dudes. It an engaging and inspiring read. Some thoughts were provide were enjoyed reading things—like this from John Lennon: "The more he hesitates is not determine; it is to find some work to do, some thing to care about."

The older several more to reflect, the book advises, get hands on your words—short notes, 9th visual get (new portrait of time, or when Professor John Keating [played by Robin Williams] in the film "Dead Poets Society") stood on top of the table and said: "Why do I stand here?" His answer...."The world looks different from up here."

Leider's statement rang it some years ago: "I'm a firm they process or journey." Business change becomes for their participants from freedom to uplift, in order to make them empower their "maximum exploring."

And their you can new your life, getting a cue from Steven Hawkgrand (quoted in the book) who said: "Life can really be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards." The authors intend us to have "burning points"...plants of quite "where the sun never seems to moonlighted with me."

Thus, as we negotiate the ages and stages of our lives, we continually give up parts of ourselves—we unpack—and discover treasures. We re-unpack.

The book began with the reminder that executives must "re-find their smile." Since when did your smile get out of the door or the window? The author's advice is as light as their bags with these simple to do's: Make do-able lower goals, learn to say no, deepen existing relationships rather than build new ones (!), find beauty and satisfaction within and from the outside, and take the long view ...and then journey forever.

In the book offering a cloth, memorial like fabric absolutely not. Unpack your bags with this reminder for the journey of a lifetime: "Living passionately for today and purposely for tomorrow." (dianemv@pi.com.net)

Jewelry industry can be a silver lining for RP

"IF THE local industry functions cost efficient, the country can become a major source of pearl. It will produce very good quality jewelry. Our ability to adapt to design trends is not a stringent selling tool," says Ma. Encarnacion of Multichoice.

Twenty years in the jewelry business, Encarnacion believes it can be done by upgrading standards. "It pays to invest on new equipment, exhausting of existing and new machines to enhance production capacity and efficiency, continuing and constant design development to update on the look."

Encarnacion adds there is more to the jewelry business than making money. "It is definitely not a get-rich quick type of venture because it is not a get-rich quick type of venture because it is not a get-rich quick type of venture because it is

Sunday LIFESTYLE

Lito Chiti-Batul-Formoso

"YES, LAH," Peter Pinder's bust of Jesus Christ made entirely of fiberglass

Lifestyle goes to Baguio

HALF the population of Metro Manila will troop to Baguio for the Holy Week, and we can't blame them.

Baguio is a chillin' place. Baguio smells of pines and flowers. Baguio wonder of freshly picked strawberries and veggies from La Trinidad, exotic bread from the Baguio Country Club, circulation coils from the Translator Bakery, Long Johns (Silver Hotel) from the market, ube jam from the Good Shepherd Convent or Tamtamon's, butter cookies, peanut brittle, longganisa, and food, glorious food from its many restaurants.

And the shopping. The shopping is terrific, especially for the harried freelancer who usually starts in and out of malls on errands and never gets the time to browse. In Baguio, too, you must do the market. You will thank/change yourself if you don't.

Old City Baguio, the area mall that offers a splendid view of Baguio because it now stands where once was Plaza Herrera, invited Lifestyle for a weekend of rediscovery, and we came back with fresh tips (do check out sections C1, 10 and 3, too!) that we hope will help those who are headed in this mountain city make the most of their stay.

Art from the highlands

Peter Pinder and Ben-Hur Villanueva are only two reasons Baguio has become famous as a haven of artistry and creativity

Text by Gibbs Cadiz
Photos by Jean Bondoc

ENTERING the Pinder house on Asin Road just outside Baguio City is like entering an arts and crafts store.

Paintings and sketches line the walls. Tables and cabinets are filled with weddings, anniversary and birthday gifts. Corners are occupied either by one of a kind lamps, bundles of leather bags, or ethnic sculptures. Even the bathroom walls are filled with colorful shells.

This is not surprising, as the entire Pinder family is into the arts. Peter, the father, is well-known for his works in leather, wood and fiberglass. Wife Ellen is painter and art teacher. Their daughters Jane and Samantha and only son Stephen dabble in interior design, drawing, sculpture and crafts.

Their home, situated on a cliff overlooking a magnificent view of Benguet's mountain ranges, is an ode to native imagination and creativity.

But you wouldn't know it from Peter Pinder's fiberglass creations scattered all over the yard. The massive dark gray boulder you see in the center? Yep, that's made of fiberglass. The human-size reverent-looking replicas of the faces of Rizal, de Veles, David, Alexander The Great

(CONTD.)

WE ARE FAMILY. The Pinders (from left): son Reuben, Peter, wife Ella, and twin daughters Kara and Samantha

Art from the highlands

HOT SUIT. Kara Pinder strips one of her father's signature works, a fiberglass boulder/ seat molded from real rock

GUARDIAN OF THE REALM. Replica of a Qin-dynasty terracotta soldier

and Sons? All fiberglass, too.

Count in well the most beaches, waterfalls, specialimen of ancient artworks such as South American moon sculptures and Bagan balals, even an elephant emerging full grown from a curtain of green hanging plants by the side, and you get an idea of the unique skill Pinder brings to the industrial strength material that is fiberglass.

"For almost 30ed doing things, even as a kid," says Pinder, 50, a Briton who has lived in Bagnio since 1971. He first came to the Philippines in 1972, and came back for good three years later.

Pinder's first large-scale fiberglass project was a 15-ft high waterfall inside the former Hyatt Terraces Hotel. It had authentic-looking boulders which Pinder modeled from real rock. Unfortunately, the Baguio earthquake in 1990 demolished the hotel and buried the boulder waterfall underneath.

From rock formations, Pinder shifted to rock furniture. These days, he does mostly commissioned works of stools, benches and other outdoor furniture in stone-like forms, complete with natural hues and the infinitesimal flaws and peculiarities of the elements.

How does he come up with the extremely naturalistic colors? "That's a mixture of secret ingredients," he says.

Now on his upgrade a navel. Even now he's busy retrofitting a truck to both fiberglass and steel. The engine is vintage Volkswagen (still working, of course), and the interiors will be in leather. Needless to say, the validity of it all is no barrier to Pinder's boundless ingenuity.

The entrepreneurial urge has never extended to politics—not of late. His sculptural clans set of major Philippine political figures made it to the cover of Inquirer's Jan. 30, 2003 issue. Only 100 sets are available for collectors. "Let's see if you can change history with the game," he says.

Bronze master

If Pinder has carved his niche in fiberglass, then Ben Villanueva has made his in bronze.

Villanueva, 65, is a past president of the Philippine Society of Sculptors, and was an art teacher at the Ateneo de Manila grade school for 30 years. In 1999, he retired and moved to Baguio, where he established Arko ni Apo, his home-turn-gallery.

"For a long time, I did a lot of an eminent 'sculptress' to make ends meet," says Villanueva. "I didn't have enough money, so I fell it is people's like my work."

And liked them they did. Among Villanueva's more landmark works are the 8-ft tall bronze sculpture of St. Aloysius Gonzaga at the St. Louis University campus and a 5-ft monument of Christ with open arms, called "Thy Will Be Done," at St. Paul's College QC. He is set to create a 7-ft shrine to St. Vincent de Paul for the Steyerstein Fathers in Tandang Sora, QC.

"Work is meditative for me," says the deeply religious artist. "I'm always inspired by my wife, my family, the environment around me."

Aside from bronze, Villanueva has worked with marble, wood, cement, and ceramics. He considers National Artist Napoleon Abueva and Solomon Saprid among his influences.

About 15 of Villanueva's sculptures, as well as the paintings of his equally accomplished model-turn-artist son Bombo, were exhibited in Singapore last year. Untold pieces will go on exhibit again this April as part of the Singapore Art Festival.

Villanueva sees these events as a way to reach out to more people through his art. "I consider myself ego-humble, so I always try to promote the art and culture of the Cordillera," he says.

Those who can't afford his pricier works are welcome to browse through the various ethnic knickknacks displayed at Arko ni Apo.

The small shop is a veritable showroom of striking sculptural images, a testament to Villanueva's abundant imagination and aptitude in a range of heavy materials, be it hardwood or bone.

One of the most visually arresting is a carving of a mature nude in wooden, with a giant pin stuck to its belly. The title is "Enough is Enough."

"I made it after my wife has had eight children," says Villanueva, laughing.

Most of recent's has made Arko ni Apo, which faces the entrance to the popular Tam-Awat Village of artists, another Baguio staple: a destination for visitors hungry for a whiff of highland art.

Arko ni Apo is at Km. 8, Asin Road, Tuba, Benguet (tels. (063) 442-6443, (063) 2829396). Ben Mar Villanueva's Arko ni Apo is on Torres Road, Tam-Awan Village, Baguio City (tels. 074-4436832, (063) 9172983).

Lilyrose Lim in Baguio was sponsored by SM City Baguio.

E-mail the author at goodlife@inquirer.com.ph

"ENOUGH IS ENOUGH" (nudes) by Villanueva

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST. "For more creative ill have less material. Without material, nakakgutom pa rin akong gawan ng art eh," says Ben-Mar Villanueva.

SMALL MIRACLES. Villanueva's miniature models of 8-ft tall St. Aloysius Gonzaga monument at St. Louis University (top) and 8-ft tall Christ statue at St. Paul's College QC (called "Thy Will Be Done") (right)

Sunday LIFESTYLE

THE RABBIT Hand-bent of real rattan and molave are in these chairs by Sabado's Handicrafts

TRADITIONAL baskets in various shapes and sizes

Romancing the WOODWORK

Baguio visitors in search of one-of-a-kind wood furniture and home accents will have their fill at PNKY Collection and Sabado's Handicrafts

Text by Gibbs Cadiz and Alex Vergara
Photos by Jean Bondoc

PNKY Green Magazine remembers the first time her name became associated with a hot new product.

In 1996, during the Chamber of Furniture Industries in the Philippines fair at SM Megamall, she exhibited an original design, a wooden magazine holder with braided rattan handles. She got so many orders. "It has become very much copied. The design itself has evolved into bags, plant holders and so on."

Her success validated Magsino's knack for ethnic-inspired wooden crafts and designs.

"My background is in anthropology," she says, "but my natural inclination is into antiques."

That inclination led her to open an antiques shop in Baguio in the early 1980s. The shop assured its clientele on old homes all over the region. But in time, the sources dried up.

Magsino rebounded by reopening her shop as a woodcrafts store in 1996, which eventually became known as PNKY Collection. This time, she offered a mix of old and new, including reproductions of antique furniture, as well as lifestyle accessories and decorative pieces such as vases, fruit trays, candle holders, boxes and containers.

"While I'm always evolving in my design, I make sure I keep the Cordillera touch. The design may be very modern, but the shape is flower or filipino, or I try to incorporate native fiber, woodwork or carving," she explains.

Cordillera culture is often expressed in signature designs on woodwork and pottery ridges and lines, carvings of lizards, pigs and dogs, spirals and holes, and the ubiquitous bulol.

"The designs are very documented and ritualistic because that's the culture of the Cordillera tribes," she says.

Magsino often uses old wood from vintage houses. Issues and structures to create her newest pieces, like a round tabletop with a glass-filled center, which is made of molave wood that came from original house posts.

"When I design, I look at what I can do with a piece of wood, rather than having a set design in mind and then looking for a piece of wood," she adds. "And since I often work with old wood, the design comes out of the material itself."

Magsino's creations are small masterpieces of elegance and multifunctional style. Her wood tabletop is also a

CONTINUED ON C-2

FIT FOR A SEA PRINCESS. This day bed, refashioned from an original wooden settee (rear), is a favorite of Tuna Prices Valdez, says Pysky Gomez Maguire.

Romancing the woodwork

ACACIA rocking chair coordinated with matching sofa

TWO-TONE name armoires, from PNDT Collection

ARTIST AT REST. Pysky Maguire lounging in an acacia rocking chair she herself designed

THE SARAGOSI. Greg, Summerand Hiley

WOODEN pedestals and chairs by Salcedo's Handicrafts

PNDT'S couch-cushion acacia magazine holder in various sizes

Private garage sale

results beaten and a proposed concretize shoe double as containers. A damaging cloud can also be a mood or a pedestal.

"I'm now working on incorporating other materials such as hemp and hard bone horns; stone from Moore (called Ilaw sa Pinoy), and also glass, rope and metal," she says.

She pays tribute to the numerous talents of local woodworkers and handicraft makers. And then there are the buyers, many of them local young urbanites going back to things natural, indigenous and handmade.

Maguire has two stores in Baguio (in Leonard Wood Road and Baguio Country Club) and a showroom at Ionic Zone, Gervasia 8.

"My merchandise remains 90 percent Filipino. It's really a conscious effort on my part to favorize products," Maguire stresses about there will always be a demand for pieces made of solid wood.

Longevity

The same is true with Salcedo's handicrafts on Outlook Drive, Baguio City. The shop specializes in rustic and streamlined furniture pieces made from such materials as rattan, lumnguing, rattan and plywood. It also reuses wood from old homes and posts to make new furniture.

Those in search of outdoor works should look somewhere else because owners and designers Greg Salcedo and wife Hiley would rather stick to basic lines and let the natural shelter talking. The shop also carries tribal hats, baskets and wooden antiques, but not of the saw variety.

Salcedo and his staff scour the hinterlands of the North in search of wooden raw goods (Salcedo and other tribal things), some dating as far back as the late 19th century.

"In the absence of earlier dating," says Salcedo, "it's quite difficult to ascertain the exact year an image was made. Most of the time, tribal people are [characterized as] users of later old dark images are. They usually sell them to outsiders little to school."

Impending, too, are their small-size, some tribal antiques could fetch as much as P100,000. Salcedo Handicrafts also offers items for customers on a shoestring budget. One can buy a replica of a prehistoric bird for as low as P2,000 to P5,000.

"We also do a limited number of made-to-order furniture pieces as long as they're within our area of expertise," says Salcedo.

Over the years, Salcedo Handicrafts has steadily grown to cater to both local and foreign tourists. These days, it also deals with direct foreign buyers from Japan, the United States and the European Union.

"Anything don't end will always be in demand," says Salcedo. "Nothing can ever match the feel of real wood."

PNDT Collection is at 4 (Post) Road corner Leonard Wood Road, Baguio City (tel. 074-4445414; 0917-5969143). Salcedo's Handicrafts is at 16 Outlook Drive, Baguio City (tel. 074-4447832; 0919-2350265).

Lifestyle Goes to Baguio was sponsored by SM City Baguio.

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KITCHEN FAMILY. The Simanders have been serving tasty Ilokano dishes since 1985 to Baguio residents and tourists. Bestseller includes the seafood platter and bulalo soup.

ROYAL TREATMENT. Win and Billy King morning tea share at The Manor Hotel, yours a sound of something fit for royalty, such as the Sea Treasures Vegetable Vinaigrette and Linguini Pomodoro, and Chocolate Decadence with Strawberries in Mango Sauce.

Baguio is also City of Dine

Text By Yasmin Bigay-Reyes
Photos by Jun Bautista

THE CITY of Pines is also the city of some of the tastiest and most talked about restaurants. This image was further strengthened with the opening recently of SM City Baguio. With various outlets of, letting different kinds of food, the SM Baguio has become a good place to head for if you're hungry but don't know what you really want.

Most of Baguio's existing players, both old and new, are owned, managed or franchised by Baguio residents themselves. Here are some places you can go to in Baguio for filling, pleasant and memorable meals.

The Manor

Camp John Hay Manor is said to be the only place in Baguio that serves Aunt in your mouth. Pre gras and savory stuffed. Not applying since The Manor restaurant, during the afternoon, is now in the exclusive of Billy King of Le Chef. The place serves the finest French and fusion cuisine as whipped by King and his team.

The menu, which changes regularly, is always a symphony of fresh produce, exciting flavors and clever inventions. Broiled fillet of Herb, Herb of Lamb, Roasted Black Angus Tenderloin, Smoked Salmon and Shredded Chicken Salad.

With King running the show, you are assured of something fit for royalty. Not to be missed are his lobsters inspired Iced Cheese and Veggies drizzled with Sesame Vodka and Sea Bream with Egg Noodle Vinaigrette topped with Nigue and accompanied with Linguini Pomodoro.

This being Baguio, try the strawberry tarts and, for dessert, Chocolate Decadence with strawberries in Mango Sauce.

For a nightcap, chef King suggests the Piano Bar with its live, jazzy and laid-back music for a romantic ambience.

Cottage Gil's

This modest bakeshop-cum-cafe is a do-not-miss treat for people with a sweet tooth. Located at the 3rd Floor of SM City Baguio, the cottage-cafe is perfect for a lazy no-smoking cakes and pastries. Created by sisters Marie and Rogelyn Lugo, Cottage Gil's serves freshly baked cake sensations with generous toppings of cottage cheese, lemon or Oreo with fresh coconut sauce, apple pie and strawberry shortcake.

Cottage Gil's offers the talented sisters' award-winning recipes, angelic Mango Cake, which won the SPM White Ring Making contest in 1985, and Chubby Cow Pizza, which was grand prize winner at the Hershey's Bread Pizza Challenge in 1982.

The sisters think their mom, Lita Ted, for encouraging them to bake and grandmother Maing, who passed on age-old recipes for tasty desserts like suman sa ilalim.

Cottage Gil's also serves fresh strawberry smoothies, fruit shakes, Nescafe coffee and other thirst quenchers.

Kaffa Café

A good cup of coffee and a magnificent view of the Pines City make a visit to Kaffa a most rewarding exercise. At the third floor of SM Baguio, it serves Double Espresso Macchiato, Flavored Latte, Cafe Au Lait, among others. Kaffa claims to have the best espresso in town.

The coffee shop with a view is the brainchild of accountant Dan Vasquez. How "soft-born but raised in Baguio.

Vasquez set up the first Kaffa at the ground floor of Burnt Hops Mall on Session Road three years ago. The SM Baguio outlet is his second.

Kaffa is a cozy yet modern café with a full range of coffee, cream and tea infusions and brewed coffee. It uses Benguet coffee, among others, because it also produced his own plantation. For snacks, the menu, of numerous tasty and experimentative, blends the traditional way without ostentation, she says. Favorites here are Black Forest, Blueberry Cheesecake, Chocolate Cakes, Peppy Seed Muffins and Banana Bread.

Pretoria

Pretoria is more into grilled specialties. Chef Ramil Dagdagan, Rachel Ching and his partners offer a wide variety of items for hungry and healthy palates to enjoy.

Manager Leander de la Fuente says among Pretoria's best-sellers are appetizers like Lobong Ang Ang, pepper-crusted tuna, escargots, tuna belly and Sisig Baga in garlic.

From the grill, customers can get pork barbecue, fish fillet, octopus, pusit, bibe, lechon and queen ribs. Steaks include rib-eye's, beef, T-bone and pork. Top favorites are pastel-bosser and bulalo soups.

Pretoria has an eat-all-you-can lunch and dinner buffets set up daily, plus a cool pizzeria on Pl.Jr.

The cafe at the third floor of SM Baguio is the second Pretoria. The first is on Abanao Street, a third outlet may be opened in Session Road.

Woodsmyth

The place has both great looks and good food. Woodsmyth, the only Korean restaurant in SM Baguio, serves spicy treats in an elegant setting—brick, refined hall with solid wood and large rooms.

Enjoy Galbi Gimi (Korean beef stew), Tangsuyuk (sweet and sour pork fillet), BBQ Dwen ok (chicken, pork and beef barbecue) and Haemul Pajeon (seafood pancake) like dishes dished.

Owners Salvador Incera and Korean partner Jeon Ho Jo opened the restaurant to introduce Korean dishes to Baguio residents. The restaurant first opened at the Military Cut-Off. About 60 percent of their customers are Koreans.

Nirvanda Eatery

Located "near the baked" of the Baguio Country Club, the ultra-upbeat is somewhat on this modest place. Executives, politicians and ordinary residents can be seen enjoying fine dishes soup or pinagpaksiw.

Pendon Ilocos is the hub in the wall to four or. Ilocano-Tagalog hang halaw special-ties—Inabraowa, adobo, sinam, pakaket, dinuguan, igado, bagnet, pinikpikan, ginataan and tuwa.

Joseph Rimando, a dentist, handles the restaurant's daily operations while his mom, Helen, is up to turtle in 4 a.m. to do all the cooking.

Mario's

A stop to the Pine City isn't complete without visiting Mario's Restaurant, an institution for more than 20 years.

Owned and managed by Mino Bendor, the restaurant remains honored on giving customers a wholesome dining experience—from ambience to fresh and good quality food, good music and efficient and attentive service.

In Caesar's Salad, prepared right beside your table in an exquisite people tend to regard every time they visit the restaurant. The spot kitchen dishes out typical Spanish food, which is served generously—Gambas de Ajillo (plenty of spicy chicken wings, drumsticks, thighs and squid rings and Spanish chorizo), Appetizer Salchicha (wild island snipes a la wilding), Chicken and Prawn Igado (bite-sized chicken with herbs in mustard cream sauce and bacon-wrapped prawn), Longaniza Sauteed (longaniza sautéed with onions with mushrooms and olives) and Paella Valenciana.

For a memorable finale, don't forget the mango pudding and Mario's famous crepes.

Eve's Garden

Eve's Garden has chosen a location accessible serving for its healthy food concept.

Located at the Upper Lantang Road, Trinidad, Benguet, the restaurant is the equivalent of Singapore City's Soraya Garden. Evelyn Acosta's food haven offers only the best natural ingredients available. It serves 15 kinds of organically grown lettuce and a choice of seafood and meat from free-range or organically raised cattle and poultry.

The set menu includes vegetable fruit juice, a nourishing soup seasoned with homegrown herbs, salad platter of fresh, organically grown vegetables, beef or pork steak with a sprinkling of sesame seeds, cashew nuts, and raisins, and a choice of chicken, beef or seafood.

A special homemade dessert like carrot cake, and freshly brewed coffee from indigenous coffee beans or mountain tea, essential for healthy meal.

Diners should make reservations to Eve's Garden at least one or two days ahead of scheduled.

E-mail the author at ebigay@inquirer.com.ph

SWEET. Vasquez's Kaffa is a cozy modern cafe with a full range of coffee, cream and tea infusions and brewed coffee. The cafe's chocolate cake, baked by Vasquez herself, complements the coffee selection.

SHOUT-OUT. Residents are eating healthier, thanks in part to Evelyn Acosta's Eve's Garden. It serves seafood, 15 kinds of organically grown lettuce and meat from organically raised cattle and poultry.

WOODSMYTH. Business partners Salvador Incera and Korean partner Jeon Ho Jo offer authentic Korean dishes, such as this seafood soup (Haemul Mussoong).

SISTERS. Marie and Rogelyn of Cottage Gil's serve freshly baked cake sensations with generous toppings of cottage cheese, lemon or Oreo with fresh coconut sauce, apple pie and strawberry shortcake.

SIP your coffee and bite into your favorite blueberry cheesecake at The Coffee Experience on the third floor of SM Baguio. Most-loves on the Kape Eh, Joe's coffee blended with special cocoa powder from Batangas), Coffee Jelly, Rocky Road Freeze and Oreo Freeze.

Awake cosmetics are your secret weapon against the sweltering heat

Summer makeup that stays put

Text by Kinsy Sales
Photos by Randy Bartolome

KEEPING your makeup from sliding all over and all over face during summer is one mean feat. Layering it on thick for staying power is not an option because warm, weather calls for sheer finish with lighter color and texture.

Makeup artist Pro Logan hears Filipinas' shoes as the way to summer makeup, using Awake cosmetics' Spring colors collection. Awake is the elite cosmetic line from the Japanese giant company Kose.

The face for this step-by-step guide belongs to 24-year old Keiko Otaota, who is 100-percent Japanese. Educated in the United States and Canada and married to a Spanish-Filipino, she is the perfect model for Awake cosmetics, the brand with Japanese roots but Western range.

Until March 31 as all supplies last, for every P2,500 worth of Awake (that items makeup you purchase at Rustans, you can get a lip palette for free. Colors are mauve pink and smoky brown with lip brush included.

Step 1: Skincare

Keiko's makeup was removed thoroughly with Awake's fluid cleanser then toned and moisturized to prep it up for the summer make-up. Keiko is an Awake user and she uses its products on her face. "It's the reason I don't look 34 because I am very particular, as with most Japanese women, with my skincare." She especially encourages the non-greasy Hydrolight moisturizing fluid and reminds adult women this acrid golden brown aging prematurely. Sun block goes blessed by tissue as the last step to remove excess.

Step 3: Eyes

The most complicated area to make up. Eye shadow colors: Rum Cake (brown) — Winter White; Lilac — Begonia Rose; and Cosmos and Sower lid eyeliner — Phantom Brown and upper lid pencil liner in Pure Black. Eyebrows: powder gray pencil and brow powder, Mascara: The two step function mascara in black is the star product. It straightens, thickens, defines then extends the straightest and thinnest of lashes without the need for a lash curler. The other side sets the entire look.

Step 2: Creating perfect-looking skin

Primer: Perhaps the best discovery in the dawn of the 21st century. Pre-foundation primer is the key to sheer light makeup's staying power. A good primer is odorless or only slightly tinted, concealed for hydrates skin. It allows everything to grab on and stay put. The fresh look is sustained until the end is again required.

Foundation: It's the secret to perfect-looking skin. It should cover slight imperfections and discolorations so even on the true without looking heavy. Awake's Skin Renovation foundation is great for oily skin. It minimizes pore size and fills skin for a flawless, younger look.

Concealer: Perfect for covering up what foundation can't handle such as dark circles around the eyes, freckles and broken capillaries on the face.

Colors: From the Standout Spring Collection

Step 4: Lips

Awake's lipstick/lip balm is applied to dry lips to ensure uneven smooth application before any color. Proportional lip pencil in 04 is a neutral, colored lip primer that allows lipstick to stay on without drying lips as like your regular lip liner. Lipstick: Standout's Lipper Flash (not shimmer shade) is a creamy formula that lasts.

Step 5: Blush

Peyton Whip is a peachy shade that looks especially flattering on yellow-toned Asian skin tones. Applied on the tip-tips of the cheeks it makes Keiko glow. The Sandy Heron shade is used to contour the jaw line for a softer look.

Step 6: Loose powder

Standout Loose Powder ends the whole look, embodying the transition, as he now you double check the made-up face before applying the loose powder. Awake's Standout Loose Powder is made of 99 percent water soft herbs and when applied which makes it perfect for summer to feather touch ups.

Crown defenses for your crowning glory

CLINIQUE Gentle Wash Moisturizing Shampoo, Super Condition Restoring Conditioner and Dramatic Moisture Intensive Conditioner

SHU FF Soin Capillaire Après Shampooing Hair Care Conditioner

Fun and flattering makeup colors

ESTEE Lauder's Pure Color collection

THE PHYTOPLAGE haircare line includes High Protection Sun Oil, Hydrating After Sun Mist, Sun Protection Oil Spray, Sun Rehydrating Jelly, Preventive Styling Gel, Hair & Body Sun Shampoo and After Sun Repair Mask

Crown defenses for your crowning glory

By Chechie V. Moral

LATHER. Rinse. Repeat.

But the usual hair-care ritual will not suffice this summer. Like our skin, which we at least dutifully protect this summer with the daily layer of sunblock, our tresses need extra protection.

Hair is reportedly prone to excessive sun exposure and other summer-related factors like saltwater and the pool's chlorinated water. Add to those our other unhealthy stress, excessive blow-drying, chemical-laden hairstyling products and pollution.

According to Jenny Trees of the Cosmetics and Toiletries division of Rustan's, there are products that are especially for coating sun-exposed hair. These are formulated with sunscreens. Some contain ingredients that either prevent or restore sun-ravaged hair, or both.

You may need to pair with a few extra bucks for the product compared to the usual supermarket brands. But, as cliché-ridden supermarket goes, you will be saving not just your money but also your crowning glory in the long run.

Gilda Bautista of Essere Natural advises "not to use oily hair products during exposure to the sun, as oils have high thermal conductivity, which causes the hair fiber to overheat, thus leading to dehydration. She can burn the oil and 'fries' your hair."

Essere, a brand established in 1996 in Alberta that makes products from natural ingredients, has a highly specialized and personalized haircare range to suit various hair types, problems and needs.

Essere Red Wine Year Round Sun Protector prevents sun-caused hair discoloration and premature hair aging. It's a daily no-rinse spray-on lotion that, Bautista claims, has excellent natural UV filters.

For summer coloring, Bautista suggests Gloss Buster and Vitalizing Nourishing Hair Mask and Hair Protective Serum "to protect hair from splitting."

ESSERE Red Wine Year-Round Sun Protector

French brand

French brand Phytoplage has introduced the Phytoplage haircare line that specializes in the "protection and treatment of sun-exposed hair," says brand assistant Jo Ann Sue Quiocho, apart from UV filters, the products have high concentration of plant extracts that retain hair moisture.

Quite popular among customers, the Phytoplage High Protection Sun Oil, which works like sunblock, nourishes and moisturizes hair, and prevents it not just from the sun but also from saltwater and chlorine. It is also recommended for those with long hair, and is termed as "The Original."

The Phytoplage line also includes Hair & Body Sun Shampoo, After Sun Repair Mask, Hydrating After Sun Mist, Moisturizing Sun Oil, Sun Protection Oil Spray, Sun Rehydrating Jelly and, if you can't resist using styling gunk, Preventive Styling Gel.

Combining olive, grape seed, jojoba and wheat germ oils, L'Occitane Olive Hair Care Oil is intended as protective mask prior to bathing in the sea or swimming pool, or as an after-shampoo revitalizing treatment. It

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L'OCCITANE Olive Hair Care Oil

Here are hair-care products to make summer less punishing for your hair

PHYTOPLAGE Moisturizing Sun Oil